

# EUROPE *Summer 1948*



SOVIET  
OCCUPATION  
ZONES



SPHERE OF  
SOVIET  
INFLUENCE



NEW SOVIET  
BORDER



OLD POLISH  
TERRITORY



NEW POLISH  
WESTERN BORDER

BRITISH ISLES

*North  
Sea*

*Atlantic  
Ocean*

PORT-  
UGAL

SPAIN

HOLLAND

BELGIUM

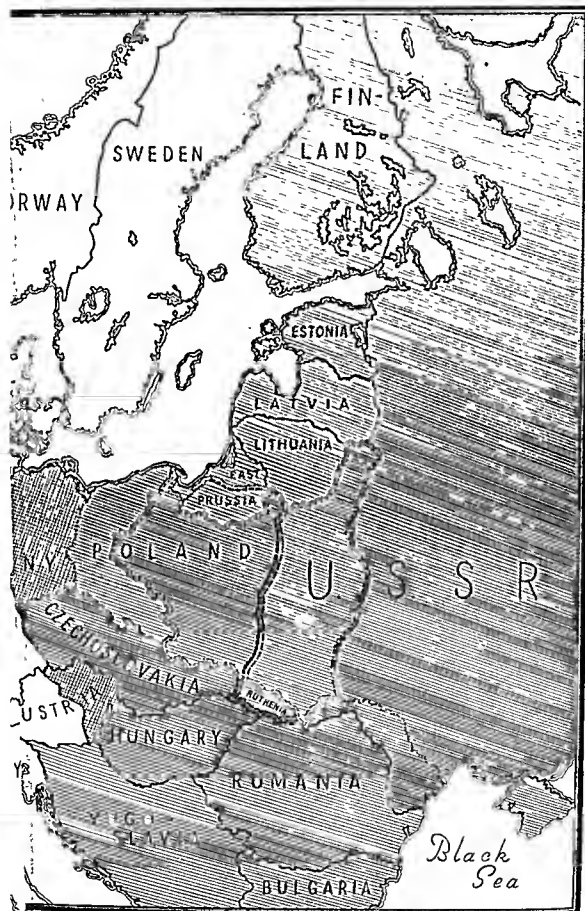
GER

FRANCE

SWITZERLAND

ITALY

*Mediterranean*



OH MY COUNTRY

# Oh my Country

by  
JOSEF JOSTEN

*"The philosophy of power is barbaric,  
inhuman and absurd philosophy"*

DR. EDUARD BENEL



LATIMER HOUSE LIMITED  
33, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, E.C.4

*First published 1949*  
by  
**LATIMER HOUSE LIMITED**  
33 LUDGATE HILL, LONDON, E C 4

**SOUTH AFRICA**

*Publishers Distributing Corpora-*  
*tion, Ltd,*  
185 Longmarket Street, Cape  
Town

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*Pty, Ltd*  
234 Flanders Lane, Melbourne, Vic  
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To my wife,  
PATRICIA GILES

## Historical Note

THERE are two possible descriptions of Czechoslovakia's geographical position. She is in the heart of Europe as well as on the crossroads of Europe. The heart is the most sensitive part of the whole structure, and in this connection history has taught us that, in times when the heart of Europe was sound, peace and prosperity ruled the Old World. The Czechoslovak Republic, which dates officially from 28th October 1918, when it was proclaimed in its political and geographical form (consisting of four provinces: Bohemia and Moravia-Silesia, known as the Countries of the Czech Crown; and Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, as it came to be known), has of course a tradition based on the thousand-year-old Czech State, which had so many important ties with the West as a whole, and with England especially, that there was at least no historical foundation for the description "a far-away and unknown country".

When we hear the famous carol about "Good King Wenceslaus", how many of us remember that he was a Czech duke who ruled from 922 to 929 in Bohemia? A Czech king fell in 1346 at Crécy, fighting the English. He was known as John the Blind, and was of Luxembourg origin. A poem by Ben Jonson refers to the battle:

"The Black Prince Edward at Cressy field . . . teares  
From the Bohemian crown the plume he weares,  
Which after for his creste he did preserve  
To his father's use, with this fit word, *I serve.*"

Two years later, John's son, Charles (the founder of Prague University), entered into alliance with the English, and his daughter Anne became the wife of Richard II and Queen of England. From that time the political and cultural ties increased. The Czech reformer, Hus, was inspired by the teachings of Wyclif. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of James I, became the wife of Frederick of the Palatinate and Queen of Bohemia—shortly before the Czechs were conquered by the Hapsburgs at the Battle of the White Mountain in 1620. They remained under this rule for 300 years.

At least two more names which contributed towards Anglo-Czech relations should be mentioned: that of Jan Amos Comenius

—"the teacher of the nations"—who took refuge in England in the seventeenth century, and the famous artist Wenceslaus Hollar, whose etchings are among the treasures of Britain. It is not without significance that, in the First World War, the President Liberator, T. G. Masaryk, and in the Second World War the President Constructor, Eduard Beneš, made London their home and centre of activity, while they worked for the liberation and unification of the Czechs and their brother Slovaks who had been under Hungarian rule for a thousand years.

Czechoslovakia's position on the crossroads of Europe, combined with her natural riches and industrial potential, made her a coveted prize for any power seeking the domination of the war-torn Continent. The German Iron Chancellor, Bismarck, expressed her strategical position with the words: "Who is master of Bohemia is master of Europe." Hitler realised it to the full, and even nowadays it is true. The formidable heavy industry, based on a good home-supply of coal, and the earning power of the rest of the export products—glass, china, electro-technical material, textiles, leather goods, sugar, chemicals, etc.—raised the standard of living to a level that could not be approached in the neighbouring countries.

In 1938 the area of Czechoslovakia was 140,508 square kilometres (after Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia was annexed by the U.S.S.R. in 1945, 127,765 square kilometres remained). The present population (after the transfer of the Germans and the loss of Ruthenia) is about 12,300,000 (in 1938 it was 14,700,000). In the Second World War the country lost nearly 170,000 of her best people, who were executed or tortured to death by the invaders. The total war-time losses were well over a quarter of a million.

The revolutionary changes early in 1948, which resulted in the overthrow of the country's legal Government, brought the Czechoslovak Republic under the rule of a totalitarian power for the second time within ten years.



## Preface

SINCE the events of February 1948, the lesson of Czechoslovakia has become a classic illustration of the danger threatening the rest of the world. But although it has hardly escaped mention in any leading article or speech on the international situation, it still runs the risk of going down to history without bringing sufficient influence to bear on the world's future trend of development. I feel that should this price, paid by millions, go unheeded, then there was no justification for the repeated demand for the sacrifice of their country.

When the case of Czechoslovakia was first brought before the Security Council of U.N.O., the then President of the Council, M. Tingfu Tsiang of China, declared:

"If the accusations should be found to be true, the world might as well face the crisis to-day rather than two, three, or five years later. More delay in facing realities does not help." But Soviet Russia once again applied the veto, and extended the "Iron Curtain" into the very heart of Lake Success, the meeting-place of the United Nations Organisation.

Jan Masaryk gave his life for a great cause, and the death of President Beneš, premature when measured in years, was another potent reminder that the second staunch pillar of democracy in that part of the world had been broken.

Yet it seems that for people who have never lived in slavery this warning is hard to understand; because the reign of law and justice is a blessing they have enjoyed for generations, they cannot imagine it destroyed.

My first exile began just after the iron fist of Hitler's Gestapo closed round Czechoslovakia. It lasted six years. I thought that was enough for the lifetime of any man. How mistaken I was!

Before the scars of war were healed, less than three years after liberation, the tide of disaster again engulfed Prague. I suddenly became a refugee for the second time in ten years. I feel, as a disciple of Beneš and Masaryk, that I must help my friends abroad to understand what has happened in Czechoslovakia, and what can happen in any other country of the world unless its citizens are determined to stem the new flood. And this is why I undertook the task of writing—with many restrictions imposed by the need for haste—the sad story of my homeland.

I want to express my appreciation of the assistance I have been given by members of the Czechoslovak underground move-

ment who saw to it that I received certain papers and information I could not bring with me. I owe much to them for the risks they took. The Security Council documents were supplied to me by Dr. Jan Papánek of the United Nations Organisation, who kindly read the Chapter "Report to U.N.O.", and by the London Information Office of U.N.O., to whom I am indebted for the photograph of Jan Masaryk talking to Mr. Gromyko. Other assistance of great value was given by former political and diplomatic personalities of the Czechoslovak democratic regime. Mrs. Jarmila Záchková-Bátková, Deputy, was good enough to read and comment upon the manuscript. Mr. František Němec, Minister in Canada until February, Colonel Ferdinand O. Miksche, Post-war Military Attaché in Paris, Mr. Ivan Herben, Editor of *Svobodné Slovo*, and Mr. Josef Pecháček and Dr. František Glaser, my former colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, were most co-operative in providing detailed information on the various aspects of the events described in the book. My wife Patricia was my most faithful assistant in this work and without her help I could not have completed it in the given time.

JOSEF JOSTEN.

*London, January 1949.*

# Contents

	PAGE
HISTORICAL NOTE. . . . .	vii
PREFACE . . . . .	ix
CHAPTER	
I. DRIVE TO THE EAST (TEN YEARS AGO) . . . . .	15
II. LIBERATION . . . . .	34
III. SOVIETISATION . . . . .	53
IV. BOMBS DISGUISED AS PERFUME . . . . .	75
V. SEVEN STEPS TO THE <i>Coup d'État</i> . . . . .	87
VI. VALERIAN ALEXANDROVITSCH ZORIN . . . . .	107
VII. BENEŠ'S DILEMMA . . . . .	135
VIII. JAN MASARYK—A CZECH MARTYR . . . . .	153
IX. REPORT TO U.N.O . . . . .	178
X. THE SECOND ESCAPE . . . . .	202
XI. A PRESIDENT'S FAREWELL . . . . .	214
XII. WHAT OF THE FUTURE? . . . . .	231
INDEX . . . . .	251

## List of Illustrations

Map of Europe, Summer 1948 . . . . .	<i>Endpapers</i>
Jan Masaryk . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Map of Europe, Summer 1938 . . . . .	19
Map of Europe, Spring 1940 . . . . .	20
Map of Czechoslovakia . . . . .	106
	<i>facing page</i>
The Queen with Dr. Beneš at the Czechoslovak Institute, London <sup>1</sup> . . . . .	128
Jan Masaryk and Andrei Gromyko at the United Nations Assembly in New York, 1947 . . . . .	129
Portion of Masaryk's message to the World Federation of United Nations Associations . . . . .	144
Gottwald on February 21st, 1948, reads his appeal to organise Action Committees, or Local Soviets . . . . .	145

<sup>1</sup>The photograph of President Beneš on the jacket, and that of H M the Queen, are the work of Erich Auerbach, of *Illustrated*

## Drive to the East (Ten Years Ago)

*"The starting point of this (February) revolution was Munich; the period of development the Second World War; and the mainspring of action the emergence of Russia as the strongest military power in Europe. To understand what happened we have therefore to go back to September, 1938."*

SIR ROBERT BRUCE LOCKHART, in the  
*American Foreign Affairs Quarterly.*

ONE DAY in London during the war Jan Masaryk told me:

"I spoke recently to a British audience about our aims. I talked for some time, perhaps thirty minutes—and that was already much longer than it usually takes me to say what I want to—but I didn't allow the word 'Munich' to cross my lips—and I know my British friends appreciated that fact more than they did the rest of my speech."

The war itself was a repudiation of the Munich Agreement, which had paved the way to the complete destruction of Czechoslovakia. From the day I landed in Britain, on 8th July 1940, I heard English people, on countless occasions, say they deplored, or were even ashamed of, the events of that fateful autumn of 1938. Much has been written on the subject, but seldom was the conviction of the men and women of Czechoslovakia understood as well as it was by Mr. Winston Churchill, who said when he addressed the House of Commons on 5th October 1938:

"All is over. Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into darkness. . . . I venture to think that in future the Czechoslovak State cannot be maintained as an independent entity. I think you will find that in a period of time, which may be measured by years, but may be measured only by months, Czechoslovakia will be engulfed by the Nazi regime. . . ."

Winston Churchill, A. V. Alexander (who was later First Lord of the Admiralty), Anthony Eden, Duff Cooper, and other enlightened British politicians looked with dismay on the scenes of enthusiasm and satisfaction in the House that followed the announcement that Hitler had invited the representatives of Britain, France and Italy to Munich to discuss the final settlement of the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia. They

also realised to the full, even as bitter opponents of Bolshevism, what would be the consequences of the exclusion of Soviet Russia from the conference table.

Until 1933, when Hitler came to power in Germany, no serious difficulties had arisen in connection with the German minority in Czechoslovakia. The big industries were located mainly in the German-populated border territories and to a large extent were in German hands. The Germans had proportional representation in the two chambers of the Czechoslovak Parliament, more schools than their numerical strength warranted, and complete cultural autonomy. The Republic of Masaryk and Beneš knew no racial or national discrimination, even during the economic crisis of 1928 to 1930, when all sections of the nation shared equally in the disadvantages and setbacks.

The change in Germany's political structure attracted the attention of the radical elements among the German nationals. The policy of appeasement, then being pursued, encouraged the growth of claims and hopes never before entertained. The Nazi cold warfare, in which words became weapons, triumphed, not only in the countries to be overrun, but also in France and Britain.

Hitler was allowed to sneer at collective security, and bit by bit to destroy the fine web of international treaties, in which the pact between France, Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia was of prime importance. If France was dragged into an unprovoked war, Britain was bound to come to her aid. Czechoslovakia's share in an armed struggle would have brought into the Allied camp Rumania and Yugoslavia, as members of the alliance fostered by Dr. Beneš as a defence against Hungarian aggression, the "Little Entente".

Dr. Beneš and Dr. Hodza, the Prime Minister and chief negotiator on the Czech side, were already prepared in the summer of 1938 to accept almost any demand voiced by the Sudeten-German Party leader, Konrad Henlein, on behalf of the German minority. Their concessions practically amounted to the creation of an autonomous state within the boundaries of the Republic—a sacrifice that the Czech leaders were ready to make to preserve peace and to deprive the Western Powers of any excuse to claim that there had not been enough goodwill to effect a bloodless, if shameful, settlement. But Henlein and his gang, supported and provoked from Germany, had no intention of coming to an agreement. As soon as any of their claims had been accepted to the last full-stop, they made new ones, such as the unrestricted right to promote Nazi ideology.

Hitler's address on Nuremberg Party Day, violently attacking Beneš and Czechoslovakia, was a signal for open revolt against

the Republic. The borderland became the scene of atrocities which the Czech police, forbidden to use weapons, had to watch passively. I was there with a colleague, Jan Drda,<sup>1</sup> and witnessed the barbaric behaviour of the German inhabitants. In Haberspink, near Falknov, we saw the entire gendarmerie station wiped out by German villagers who ran amok after Hitler's outburst. Near Loket a postmaster and his wife were caught in bed by the mob and killed with iron bars. Hundreds of similar cases were reported from the whole German inhabited borderland in Bohemia and Moravia, described without historical or geographical justification as "Sudetenland". In Asch I tried to see Henlein, but his home was guarded by armed German S.S. troopers. We spoke with the members of the Runciman Mission, who had made their headquarters in the Hotel Lyon, and who had been in conference with Henlein that morning. In the afternoon he fled to Germany and opened a violent radio campaign against the "Bandit Republic".

Immediately after our return to Prague we prepared a report which we sent to Lord Runciman's Mission, but I doubt that any attention was paid to it.

Germany's psychological warfare, conducted by Dr. Goebbels, was effective enough to turn ally against ally. This was true of the Franco-British ultimatum, presented to President Beneš in Prague on the eve of Mr. Chamberlain's second visit to Godesberg, by the respective Ministers, Mr. Newton and M. Delacroix. At 2 a.m. on 22nd September the diplomatic representatives of the Western Powers called on Dr. Beneš, who had to be awakened. Upon the instructions of their Governments they demanded that Czechoslovakia's Note to them be withdrawn without delay, since, in the event of its publication, Germany might be provoked to wage war. The Czechoslovak Note had declared that the country was unable to accept the terms of the German dictate (demanding drastic frontier changes) without the necessary reference to Parliament. The Note warned the Western Powers that acceptance of the German demands would change the whole balance of power in Central Europe, and would be a major disaster.

All the Czechoslovak proposals were rejected and the Government was notified that if it felt unable to accept the Franco-British advice, Czechoslovakia would be responsible for a possible armed conflict. This ultimatum was understood as suspension of the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance.

<sup>1</sup>Jan Drda is now a Communist M.P. and leader of the aggressive wing of Communist "intellectuals". After the February crisis he became the self appointed Editor of our paper *Lidová Novina* after Ferdinand Peroutka, Czechoslovakia's leading journalist, had been dismissed.

The reports of neutral observers, stating that the Berlin-circulated stories of Czech atrocities against the German population were purely invented, went unnoticed. The concessions made by Mr. Chamberlain to Hitler in Munich even exceeded the recommendations of Lord Runciman's Mission, and the Führer, sure of success, stepped up his demands. More than 200 of the Czech communities Germany was eventually entitled to occupy had a total population of over 200,000 Czechs against 14,000 Germans. Altogether nearly 800,000 Czechs were to be incorporated into the German Reich without any minority rights whatsoever.<sup>1</sup>

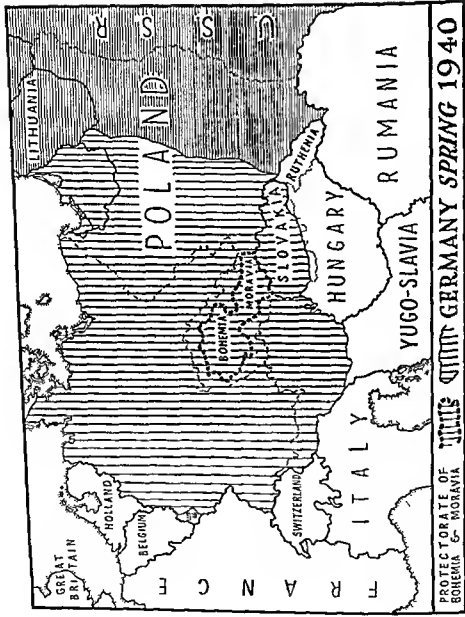
The Czechoslovak Government resigned and the pressure brought to bear on President Beneš by the Germans caused him to give up his office and retire to his country house in Southern Bohemia. The most loyal supporter of the League of Nations and of the principles of collective security, his work for his people undone, his timely warnings disregarded, Dr. Beneš's feelings, by his own description, were indescribable. On 22nd October he left Czechoslovakia.

Hitler had achieved a victory which meant not only a considerable increase in his war-potential, but at the same time deprived the Western Powers of the help of forty-five fully-equipped divisions, about 1,000 tanks and over 1,500 planes, backed by the second strongest armament industry in Europe. Czechoslovakia's natural mountain defence line, described once by Winston Churchill as frontiers given by God, running almost the entire length of her border with Germany, strengthened by an artificial defence line which was more up-to-date than the French Maginot line, was now gone, and she was completely at the mercy of the victorious and jubilant aggressor. When I was present at his preliminary questioning in Mondorf, in 1945, Keitel admitted that Hitler's threats in 1938 were bluff; his bluff had worked before, when he occupied the Rhineland with a force that was a mere fragment of the French forces behind the Rhine; and when Austria was invaded—according to Keitel—

<sup>1</sup>Under the Munich Agreement and other territorial changes that followed, Czechoslovakia had to cede 41,296 square kilometres of her total area of 140,508 square kilometres, 4,700 communities, 750,000 houses and 4,922,440 inhabitants out of the total population of 14,729,000. (If Britain had undergone the same ordeal she would have lost over 30,000 square miles with over 15,000,000 of her population.) Among these were 1,161,616 Czech- and Slovak-speaking citizens, of whom 738,000 were incorporated into Germany, 134,300 into Poland and 288,300 into Hungary—all in the name of liberating minorities! The economic losses were even more catastrophic for the country: almost all her coal resources, 70 per cent of the metallurgical industry, 80 per cent of the textile industries, and almost all the glass and porcelain industry. The main railway between Prague and Brno was cut in several places by the new frontiers. The electricity supply of the capital had now to come from "Germany" and the main industrial centres of Plzen and Moravska-Ostrava were a little over half a mile from the new border.







PROTECTORATE OF  
BOHEMIA & MORAVIA

THE GERMANY SPRING 1940

the German Army would have been forced to retreat had Czechoslovakia mobilised. Hitler's prestige with the German General Staff was enhanced accordingly, and their doubts of his invincibility were dispelled. This impression was only confirmed by his easy conquest of Czechoslovakia.

The next blow came from Poland. With Hitler's consent she occupied the important part of the Silesian industrial and coal-mining area round Teschen. On 2nd November, by a two-power dictate in Vienna (France and Britain were not invited), Hungary was ceded considerable parts of Slovakia and Ruthenia. With Hitler's prompting, on the eve of occupation of the remaining Czechoslovak territory on 15th March 1939, Slovakia declared herself an independent State. The occupation itself was a sign of the final abandonment of all pacts and guarantees, and proved finally that the German minority in Czechoslovakia had been a mere pretext to gain control of the formidable war-potential; also the road to the East was open. In the words of Dr. Beneš, the events of 15th March "opened the eyes of the world, which until that time had not been prepared to see the real intentions of Hitler's Germany that tended towards world domination".

The tragedy of Czechoslovakia was twofold. Her supreme sacrifice for the preservation of peace was in vain. It merely made war more certain. The time won by the democracies failed to justify the loss of a position of first-class strategical value, to say nothing of military aid. It could also have been won, without this sacrifice, if Kestel is to be believed, by a determined and combined stand against aggression which at that time Hitler could not have challenged.

The voice of Winston Churchill made itself heard again:

"In the destruction of Czechoslovakia the entire balance of Europe was changed. Many people at the time of the September crisis thought they were only giving away the interests of Czechoslovakia, but with every month that passes you will see that they were also giving away the interests of Britain, and the interests of peace and justice."

The President of the newly-created Protectorate, Dr. Emil Hácha, was a mere puppet. His Government was reduced to an instrument for carrying out the Reichsprotektor's orders.

It was significant that Colonel Moravec, formerly Czechoslovakia's leading military strategist and an ardent supporter of the alliance with the West, became Czechoslovakia's Quisling No. 1. Though it is no excuse, yet it cannot be denied, that the disaster of Munich was largely responsible for this change in his attitude. He told me in May 1939 that a country betrayed by the West must look for revival to her great neighbour, Germany. From that time on we knew we could no longer trust him. His

opinion was not shared by the Czechoslovak people, whose pro-Western sympathies were still so strong that Moravec soon became the most hated personality in the whole Protectorate.

The opposition of the population to the occupying power and to the ruthless measures of oppression led to a regime of terror which was without precedent in Europe. Thousands of the leading patriots disappeared into the concentration camps; racial discrimination was ordered; and the whole economic system of the country was swiftly incorporated into the German war machine. After October, when the Czechs celebrated the twenty-first anniversary of the country's independence with forbidden manifestations and anti-German slogans, oppression increased. The student demonstration of 17th November ended in a massacre of Czech students and the closing down of all universities and technical colleges. Fourteen hundred students were arrested and sent to concentration camps. Political parties were disbanded and merged, first into two, and, finally, into a single body, led by a strong pro-Fascist element recruited from the members of a formerly insignificant Fascist group of terrorists.

The German attack on Poland, and the declaration of war that followed, had inspired fresh hope in the Czech people. Many considered it suicidal of the Germans, and believed energetic steps would be taken by the British and French armies and air forces. They still had in mind the rumour that when the heavy equipment of the Czechoslovak Army was offered after Munich to the democracies, with the suggestion that it should be transported via Rumania and the Black Sea, it was not accepted. They drew the conclusion that the Allied forces must be so well equipped that they did not need what Czechoslovakia was able to offer.

In those first hours of war Dr. Beneš was first in our minds. We know now that he heard the declaration of war, first by Mr. Neville Chamberlain and then by M. Daladier, on the radio in his small house in Putney. Jan Masaryk and Dr. Max Lobkowitz, later our Ambassador in London, were with him. It was the beginning of fresh activity for Dr. Beneš. A few days later he met Lord Halifax for their first official discussion on Czechoslovakia's share in the Allied war effort.<sup>1</sup>

I had been dismissed from my paper by the Germans at the beginning of the occupation. Since then I had been collecting news of economic and military character, relating to the German war potential, which was regularly passed out of the country. I was in touch with a group of patriots who were trying to

<sup>1</sup>In his *Memoirs* Dr. Beneš refers to the meeting and quotes Lord Halifax, who welcomed him: "We in England are fully aware of the responsibility we share for the fate of your country and also your personal fate."

organise routes of escape for young men able to undertake military service. Several of my colleagues had been arrested by the Germans immediately after occupation, and still more when their anti-German activities were discovered. One day I was warned it was time to disappear. I left my flat and stayed with friends, changing my address constantly. At the beginning of December 1939 I was put in touch with a former colonel of the Army Medical Corps who lived in Dejvice, a suburb of Prague.<sup>1</sup> He gave me a password and the address of a tobacconist's shop on Wenceslaus Square in the centre of Prague, directions that were to lead me to freedom after nine months under German rule.

"I haven't had a smoke since Monday," I said.

"Sssh, don't talk so loudly. One never knows. Come in and close the door carefully. . . . Your man has turned up at last, and he will see you over the border. Leave it to him; he knows his job. You will meet him at the Masaryk Station at nine o'clock sharp. Your train is leaving ten minutes later, and it is better not to risk waiting there beforehand. Good bunting, old man—and you'd better keep those cigarettes to calm you down—you'll need them more than you think!"

Of course I had not had a smoke since Monday, because I never smoke. But those words introduced me to the tobacconist in whose shop I was given my last instructions for a journey that had been planned well in advance. . . .

I was not alone. A Prague taxi-driver called Josef, who had driven me when I was after stories for my paper, was coming with me. I knew him well enough to tell him something of my plans, and then no argument would put him off.

In the evening at the Masaryk Station we spotted our man. Everything worked according to plan, and we followed him to the train. We did not talk until we reached Brno, the Moravian capital, and changed for Uherske Hradiste, a town near the Slovak boundary more than two hundred miles from Prague. The plan was simple—the guide, Martin, who was making the same journey once a fortnight, bringing supplies of home-made embroidery to Prague, would engage the guards in conversation while we two slipped along a footpath behind the road barrier and so over the new frontier the Germans had made between the Protectorate and "independent" Slovakia.

It worked, and we joined up again in a nearby pinewood. The first crossing had been easier than we expected. We had a warm welcome in Martin's mountain home, and his wife, Betina, did all she could to make us comfortable.

<sup>1</sup>When I returned home after the war I looked for the Colonel—but he had been caught and executed by the Nazis

The next day Martin's brother brought us down to the beautiful Javorina valley and we spent the night with a young couple who formed the next link in the chain made by the excellent escape organisation. Stephen and his wife were Protestants, but both joined the Fascist Hlinka movement to cover their anti-German activities. They volunteered to accompany us right to the Hungarian frontier to a village called Deges where their family had a farm. We went by train and bus, and finally a horse-drawn cart took us across the flat country between the bus terminus, in Urmin, and Deges.

It was about five o'clock in the evening when we got there. We were only supposed to stay a few hours at the farm, making the frontier crossing after darkness and before the moon rose.

As in the Javorina hut and Stephen's home, we were received as honoured guests. But there it seemed our lucky star had deserted us. We were just having our supper when the door opened and a woman entered the room with eyes red from crying. Ondrej, her husband, who was to guide us into Hungary, was dead! Ever since the day before she had been waiting for him to come back. He helped some students on their way into exile. To-day the Hlinka Guards, the Slovak S.S., came to investigate what Ondrej had been doing last night before he left home, and to find out who were the people seen with him.

"It's no use telling lies," they said with their usual ruthlessness. "We shot him because he didn't stop when we ordered him."

Maria waited until it was dark again, and when she was sure no one was about she came to tell us what had happened.

We had to act as quickly as possible. We realised several people had seen us on the way in the cart, and if the Hlinka Guards came to search the village all the people who gave us a helping hand would be in danger. So we had to go alone and at once! We had no Hungarian money, we hardly spoke a word of Hungarian, and did not know the way to the nearest railway station which was some twenty miles distant. That had all been left to Ondrej, who was now dead.

I was taken to an upper room and shown the plain we had to cross.

"You will follow the street in front of the house," said the farmer's daughter, "until you reach a small square. Turn to the left and you will come to a cemetery. Some five hundred yards from there is the Hungarian border. It's being watched. Lie flat and watch the guards. They patrol in couples along the border and it takes them about ten minutes to cross their beat. They are reinforced by other guards, too, and they are up to all the tricks. When you get over the border don't stop until

you are out of the danger zone. The village on your right is Tardosked and the lights on your left come from Komjatice. There in the distance, some twenty miles from here, is Nove Zamky, or, in Hungarian, Erszeg Ujvar. With God's help you'll be there before dawn. Now you must go. . . ."

So we went. We lay flat as we had been told and crept forward when the guards disappeared. We wanted to run, but it was impossible. The ground was covered with frozen puddles and the ice cracked with loud staccato noises which we thought must be heard miles away. Our progress was very slow. We imagined a hidden guard behind every bush, and often lay and waited. The moon rose so bright that our shadows became as big as our fears. Ondrej's fate was in our minds.

Josef whispered to me once: "I wish I had my taxi with me!" I knew he was already tired.

It was nearly 5 a.m. when we reached the railway station in Nove Zamky. According to the time-table in the waiting-room we had more than an hour to spare before the train for Budapest came in. We wanted to try our luck and ask the waiter in the restaurant to change our money, but while we were in the restaurant we came face to face with two policemen.

"Your passports, gentlemen," was all they said. We understood. We had no passports, no visas and practically no money; but we found a new home—the local prison.

In our cell there were already eight or nine people lying close together on the wooden platform that covered two-thirds of the confined space. They woke, and some began to laugh, as the key rattled in the lock. They were all Czechs! We soon knew everyone's story, and on the walls read the names of those who had come and gone before us. Judging by the number of planes drawn there, the Czechoslovak Air Force had been well represented.

On the third day we were called to the police barracks, together with one of our fellow-prisoners, Tomas Zrník, a student from Brno, who wanted to become an airman. He drew Spitfires and whistled all day long. The police gave us a paper to sign. It might have been a health certificate or a death warrant—we could not understand a word of it—but we signed. Later we learned we had declared we would never again attempt to enter Hungary.

Then we were told to put our few things together and two policemen saw us to the station. We realised we were to be expelled. But whither? If to Yugoslavia, it would suit our plans. The Yugoslav people had every sympathy with the Czechs, whose country had been swallowed up. Their attitude was very different from that of Hungary, which, although still neutral,

was collaborating with the Nazis and assisting their war effort in every possible way. As a reward she had been allowed part of the spoils—a good portion of Slovakia, and the whole of Ruthenia. Our prison in Nove Zamky was on the territory she had seized.

When the train moved off, however, we found its direction was Slovakia. That meant the Hlinka Guards, the Gestapo, and certain death. So, while our guards were having a game of cards, one by one we jumped off the slow-moving train.

This time we were not going to be caught so easily. We slept in hay-stacks by day and walked by night, always towards Budapest, and the French Consulate, where we hoped to get help. Tomas sold his wrist-watch to provide some cash, part of which we hid in a hole in a loaf of bread we carried in turn. We ate ice to keep going. It was bitterly cold, and there was at least two feet of snow.

While we were crossing one of the frozen rivers, my friends had already reached the other bank when the ice cracked and I fell in. The precious loaf, which it was just my turn to carry, slipped out of my hands and disappeared. I managed to get out, but my left hand was badly hurt. My wet clothes froze, but we struggled on until about 4 a.m. the next day when I felt I could go no further. We were all hungry and I was burning with fever. My hand was very swollen—later I learned my wrist was broken. Budapest was still about sixty miles away. We counted our remaining money and decided to make another attempt to go by train.

The station was in a village called Kohidze, about ten miles from the Danube. The waiting-room was full of people who turned to look at us as we entered, and stared at our torn clothes and unshaven faces. Almost before we had looked round two gendarmes entered and made straight for Josef, who had wandered a few paces away from us, to ask for his passport. Tomas nudged me and nodded at the half-open door near us. Under cover of the excitement we slipped out. We ran across the tracks in front of an incoming train, which cut us off for the moment from any pursuit. But what about poor Josef? If we could only reach Budapest perhaps the French Consulate would help us rescue him.

We walked on, trembling with cold. One after the other we succeeded in crossing the guarded bridge over the Danube. There were no more hay-stacks and in daylight we hid in the forest. We could no longer sleep as we would have frozen to death.

In the excitement of getting away from the railway station we forgot how tired we were, but now it was worse than ever. Our last biscuit and lump of sugar were gone and we were hungry.



beyond description. In the villages we passed we saw people celebrating—it was New Year's Eve!

We knew we could not go many miles more without eating. Sometimes I fell to the ground and Tomas helped me to my feet. Then Tomas began to fall, too. We sat for a while in the ditch. We still had enough money to buy a loaf of bread and probably a glass of wine each. "Kenyer" and "bor" were the only two Hungarian words I knew, anyway.

We spotted a light in one of the little shops and took the risk. They did not pay much attention to us. We drank the wine and took the bread with us.

What a transformation! We began to sing, and the world danced about us. Why shouldn't we wish a happy New Year to the gendarme standing in our way?

The gendarme looked at us and said: "Halt!"

"Where have you been?" He pointed to our clothes which were white with the snow that stuck to them when we fell.

"Home," was our answer.

"And your papers?"

"Home."

"Talk sense! Where are you going?"

"Home!"

"They're as drunk as . . ." muttered the gendarme. Fortunately for us he had taken us for Slovaks, of whom there were many in Hungary. At least that was how we imagined it to be afterwards when our heads cleared. He waved his band and we stumbled on.

We reached Budapest the next morning. With the help of the French Consulate we found somewhere to stay, and slept for twenty-four hours. Then we planned what to do next.

The situation in Budapest was not at all what we had envisaged. There were some twelve hundred Czechs there, but only two hundred were at liberty and the rest in different prisons. We were told there was no help for Josef. He would probably be brought to Budapest and tried, as it was his second offence. One day he might be lucky enough to escape if he was not sent back to the Nazis. We still hoped that if we reached Belgrade they might do something there.

The French Consulate helped to form the refugees still at large into small groups. They gave each of us a little money, in Hungarian and Yugoslav currency, and provided guides. We had to leave the country the same way as we came—illegally.

I think it was the ninth day of our stay in Budapest, constantly changing our hideouts, when Tomas was attached to a group that was about to leave. I followed the next day, with three other men.

It was a difficult trek and our guide refused to go all the way to the frontier. We wandered for many hours after he left us, and were just emerging from a deep forest when we struck a line of barbed wire with hundreds of small bells attached to it. It had been erected by the Yugoslav frontier guards to warn them at night of intruders. Now it was daylight, but a Yugoslav soldier spotted us and covered us with his rifle. He shouted: "Halt!"

We lifted our hands and cried: "We are Czechs. We are friends! Don't shoot!"

We were welcomed with open arms. At the nearest defence post (there were hundreds along the Yugoslav-Hungarian border) they gave us eggs and strips of fat bacon, with wine. We sang and celebrated our freedom.

From the town of Subotice we continued our journey by train to Belgrade. There I learned that Tomas's group had been caught in Hungary while approaching the Yugoslav border.

From Belgrade, with a group of my countrymen who wanted to join the Czechoslovak Army in France, I was guided to the nearest French Army depot—in Lebanon! We travelled through Macedonia to Greece, on to Turkey, where we crossed the Bosphorus, touched Ankara, and arrived at the beginning of February in Beyrout. There we enlisted in the Army as volunteers for the duration of the war.

For almost a month we waited for our ship to France. It called at Alexandria and then Algiers, before landing in Marseilles on 5th March, 1940.

In Southern France, more than half a year after the outbreak of war, there were practically no signs of it. Here the training of the Czechoslovak Division, which, together with the units of the Czechoslovak Air Force, was militarily subordinated to the French High Command, was completed.

Political leadership of the fighting Czechoslovaks was in the hands of the National Committee, which then had its seat in Paris, but was headed by Dr. Beneš, who resided in London. Neither M. Daladier nor M. Bonnet, both in leading positions in the French Government, attempted to make good the harm they had done to the Czechs at Munich, or even to give Dr. Beneš loyal co-operation. At that time the Committee was guided in Paris by Dr. Beneš's faithful lieutenant, the Catholic leader, Msgr. Jan Šrámek, a man of amazing energy who, at the age of seventy, had made an adventurous escape from Czechoslovakia via Poland.

The Czechoslovak Army and Air Force, though small, played its part in the Battle of France. The airmen shot down over one hundred planes, and the army units, in a hopeless situation, put

up a gallant opposition until they were recalled from the front at the time of the French surrender. All Czechoslovaks fighting in France were declared by the Germans to be traitors, and would be treated as such if captured.

My unit, the Signal Corps, retreated to Bordeaux, where it was embarked for evacuation to Britain. After the fall of Paris, Bordeaux became the new French capital, and the seat of the Government until it was moved to Vichy.

I had volunteered to remain behind and help evacuate members of the Czechoslovak National Council, who were stranded in Cognac, nearly a hundred miles north-west from Bordeaux. I drove there and arrived on the night of 18th-19th June. I returned with Dr. Hubert Ripka<sup>1</sup> and several of his colleagues to Bordeaux. I was then assigned to the evacuation of the Secret Service Department of our Army, working in a team with several other cars, and finally crossed on my own from the small town of Arcachon in the Bay of Biscay to Sete, near Marseilles, to bring into safety confidential material for which there was no room in the small boat in Arcachon which took the Secret Service personnel to a warship waiting outside the three-mile zone.

In the meantime, thanks to the efforts of Dr. Beneš, it was possible to secure the help of the British Navy to complete the evacuation from Sete of the Czechoslovak troops who had not been able to leave earlier. We left French waters on 24th June and were landed on 8th July in Liverpool after a prolonged and disagreeable voyage.

On British soil the Czechoslovak Army was reorganised and prepared for its new tasks in connection with the defence of the British Isles against the acute danger of German invasion. The Air Force was almost immediately equipped with new fighter planes, mostly Spitfires, and took part, together with the British, Canadian and Polish Air Forces, in the epic Battle of Britain, with a measure of success that brought fame to the first two Czech squadrons then in operation.

The Army was stationed in Cholmondeley Park (and how long it took the Czechs to spell and pronounce it!) in Cheshire, where it was reviewed for the first time by Dr. Beneš on 26th July 1940. The President brought us the news that the British Government had already recognised the provisional Czechoslovak Government set up on British soil, under his presidency and with Msgr. Jan

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Hubert Ripka was before the war the Diplomatic Editor of *Lidové Noviny*. In France he became a member of the National Council, and after the recognition of the Government in England he was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs. In the first post-war Government he was appointed Minister of Foreign Trade. With him in Cognac were two other former members of the staff of *Lidové Noviny*, besides myself, Dr. Duchacek, the Paris correspondent, who after liberation became the Chairman of the Foreign Committee of the National Assembly, and Mr. Feigl.

Šrámek, the leader of the Catholic Party, as Prime Minister. Jan Masaryk was Foreign Minister.<sup>1</sup>

It was hoped at this time that the President would succeed in settling some differences known to have been incited by the extreme left elements in the Army, especially the men who had joined the Army in France after having fought earlier in Spain. They were known among us as "Spaniards". They without doubt fought bravely for the preservation of the Republican regime and with a certain amount of idealism, and were disappointed when they were afterwards held in special camps in France. They were released when they joined the Czechoslovak Independent Division. They saw the pitiful downfall of France caused by the inadequate equipment of the Army and loss of fighting morale. Under these conditions the "Spaniards" easily fell victim to the underground Communist propaganda, that this was an "Imperialist war" which was not the concern of a true Communist.

This attitude was also the official standpoint of Moscow, observing to the letter, and in spirit, the pact of "friendly neutrality" concluded with Hitler's Germany before the beginning of the Polish campaign on 23rd August 1939, and which resulted in the partition of Poland between the Nazis and the Bolsheviks.<sup>2</sup>

About 700 men then declared their intention of leaving the Czechoslovak Army. They remained deaf to Dr. Beneš's plea to carry out their patriotic duties. It is interesting that one of them was Dr. Vladimír Clementis who, later, in liberated Czechoslovakia, was Under Secretary, and, after Masaryk's death, Minister, for Foreign Affairs.

Reports reaching London on Communist activities at home in that stage of the war were in complete conformity with the attitude of our Communists abroad. Dr. Beneš was fully informed and was under no illusion about their peculiar brand of patriotism. Thanks to the Communists, the underground battle on the home front had more than one aspect.

In the forefront stood the enthusiastic army of unknown warriors who were recruited from every profession and at every age to print and distribute underground leaflets and newspapers,

<sup>1</sup>The Government was set up to represent all political shades of opinion in pre-war Czechoslovakia, and included Mr Jan Becko, Dr L. Feierabend, General S. Ingr, Mr Jan Lichner, Mr Jan Masaryk, Mr Jaromír Necas, Mr F. Nemec, Dr S. Orszky, Mr E. Outrata, Dr. H. Ripka, Dr J. Slavík, and General R. Víst. Because of their attitude towards the war, the Communists of course were not at that time included in the Government.

<sup>2</sup>The pact immediately affected the Czechoslovak Communist emigration in Britain, which, in the days of the signing of the Germano-Soviet treaty, adopted a hostile attitude towards Beneš's action for the liberation of his people suffering at home under the Nazi yoke. The leading Communist representative at that time in London was Mr Václav Nosek, who, in 1945, became the Communist Minister of the Interior.

to sabotage communications and maintain radio links with the London Government. These owed no allegiance to any party, but only to their nation. Their work was greatly assisted by the parachutists trained in Britain and dropped over their homeland, whose finest feat was the execution of Reinhard Heydrich, the German Police General who was sent to Prague as Himmler's deputy to stamp out the Czech opposition to the occupation. In retaliation for his death, which shook the myth of the invincibility of the German overlords, K. H. Frank ordered the destruction of the Czech village of Lidice, whose name in turn became the symbol of German atrocity in occupied Europe.

The leading figure in the resistance movement and the most successful conspirator was the courageous scientist and University lecturer Professor Vladimir Krajina. Professor Krajina was responsible for delivering to Dr. Beneš the text of the decisions reached on the future policy of the Czechoslovak underground Communist Party, which were agreed at a meeting held on 15th December 1940. The President described to this document at some length in his *Memoirs*. The main points of the Czech Communist policy in those days of collaboration between Moscow and Berlin were:

(1) The Second World War was an Imperialist war.<sup>1</sup>

(2) The Soviet Union, which was considerably strengthened during the time of the "Imperialist war", politically, militarily, and also territorially, represented a strength which, together with the revolutionary movement of the international working class, and with the now subjugated nations, would determine the outcome of the war.

(3) Soviet-German friendly relations were the foundation stone of the international situation, which had halted all the Imperialist and anti-Soviet plans of the Franco-British bloc and also the criminal aims of the United States.

(4) Molotov's journey to Berlin was of historical importance, because the continuation of friendly relations between Germany and Soviet Russia rendered impossible the U.S. plans for turning the tide of war towards the East.

(5) The World Revolution of the working class carried out on the pattern of the Soviet revolution could be the only outcome of the war.

(6) Beneš, together with his clique of emigrants, was, after the fall of France, completely in the service of British imperialism and aimed at the establishment of an anti-German and anti-Soviet State. Their actions constituted a threat of bringing

<sup>1</sup>The report was published on pp. 213-17 of Dr. Beneš's *Memoirs*.

the Czech nation into a tragic clash with the German revolutionary working class and with the Socialist homeland of all working people, the Soviet Union.

(7) Only the Czechoslovak Communist Party was the true opponent of Beneš's nationalist and anti-German agitation, and was maintaining its underground organisation successfully.

The ideology expressed in this document shows clearly that the Moscow-directed policy of the Communist underground movement all over Europe was based on the false expectation that the German working class would emerge victorious from the struggle, or would at least prevent a clash between Germany and U.S.S.R.

The Communists in Czechoslovakia (like their comrades in other Nazi-dominated countries) therefore concentrated their activities on building up their underground party organisation instead of fighting the Nazis. Misled by the pact between Moscow and Berlin, their underground groups were easily vulnerable to German infiltration, through co-operation with alleged German Communists, many of whom, in fact, were the paid agents of the Gestapo. In his reports to Berlin (found after the war), the German Minister for the Protectorate, the ill-famed K. H. Frank, stated more than once that the Communist underground movement was of no danger, because it was not only controlled, but to a certain extent directed, by the Gestapo, which had planted its agents right in the top positions of the underground Politburo.

The day Germany turned her weapons against the U.S.S.R. there came a sudden change in this policy. The "Imperialist war" was transformed overnight to a "Patriotic war". Many of those who had left the Czechoslovak Army in Britain in Autumn 1940 did everything to be readmitted to its ranks, or to join the Czechoslovak war effort in other ways. Dr. Clementis, for instance, now took an active part in radio warfare, and, to do him justice, was a good speaker and commentator. Dr. Vladimír Bernasek, another prominent Communist, who until now had stood completely aside, underwent basic military training and was immediately transferred to London.<sup>1</sup>

By that time the European Service of the B.B.C. was not only directed from the Foreign Office but had been built up to a large extent to meet the needs of the Allied Military Command. In

<sup>1</sup> I had the doubtful pleasure of observing the activities of both Dr Clementis and Dr Bernasek from their early days in the Army, later in the broadcasting and propaganda services of the *émigré* Government in London, and again after their final reinstatement in Prague, where each held important positions in the State doomed to eventual Communist domination. Clementis, as previously mentioned, was Masaryk's Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Bernasek was the "intellectual" right-hand man of the true "working class" representatives (first Gottwald and then Zápotocký) in the premiership.

the various Continental Services the military character had been predominant for some time and the active sabotage of the German war machine was instigated more and more. From 1943 the partisan movements all over Europe looked for their instructions to the B B C. In June of that year I had been loaned by the Army to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, to edit the Czech military broadcast transmitted via the B B C, under Colonel Vlček<sup>1</sup> of the Military Propaganda Section. Our regular military commentaries, made by a colonel of the Czech Secret Service, were usually followed by a strangely worded announcement, such as "Attention, attention, attention, Spring is in the kitchen!" or "Traveller left for Moravia", and so on. These were messages for the patriots at home.

It was a memorable day for me when I announced over the radio that the Allied Governments, at the suggestion of the War Crimes Commission, had inscribed on their list Karl Herman Frank, the Sudeten German traitor, as Czechoslovakia's War Criminal No. 1, little knowing that one day I would be privileged to inform the President of his arrest and his whereabouts in Germany. I escorted Frank from Frankfurt to Prague when he was handed over to the Czechoslovak authorities after the war for trial.

<sup>1</sup>Colonel Vlček later promoted to the rank of General, was among those purged in February 1948. He managed to escape abroad.

## CHAPTER TWO

# Liberation

*"I do not, of course, cherish any illusions and I know that conditions will be difficult, more difficult than after the last war."*

DR. EDUARD BENEŠ, 3rd February 1914.

WHEN Adolf Hitler forced Russia to enter the war she once again became Czechoslovakia's ally. The 1935 treaty was renewed, and, with Colonel Svoboda in command, a Czechoslovak Army sprang up on Russian soil from the remains of the volunteer units that had survived the Polish catastrophe in 1939 and had been interned in Russia.

Czechoslovak Ministers in London soon came to the conclusion that an alliance with the Soviet would best ensure that there would be no delay in setting up their own administration if some of the Czechoslovak territories should be liberated by the Red Army. The treaty, which was to guarantee national independence and safeguard the country against possible future German aggression, was discussed with the British Foreign Office, and President Beneš broached it to President Roosevelt on his first official visit to Washington. The Beneš *Memoirs* make it clear that even at that time the Americans were concerned that full guarantees should be given for Czechoslovakia's complete independence throughout her entire territory, and that no other country would interfere with her internal affairs or support political movements that looked beyond the national sphere.

The Soviet was influenced in treaty discussions by her desperate need of military and economic help. It was by no means sure that the same willingness to co-operate in international affairs would persist after the Nazi danger had been overcome. The Marxist doctrine of the "final liquidation of the bourgeois system of capitalism, and of the Communist leadership in the struggle for the triumph of human society without class distinction" was never abandoned, in spite of Moscow's many attempts to dispel the suspicions which still prevailed in the West. The Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty, it had been agreed, was subject to ratification after five years by the Parliament in Prague. Dr. Beneš was to go to Moscow for the signing. His journey, planned for the summer of 1943, was delayed when Allied



authorities suggested that it would be unwise to make specific commitments before the council of Foreign Ministers had decided upon future war strategy and post-war policy in wider terms.

In the meantime, on 6th November 1943, Marshal Stalin formulated as Russia's chief war aims:

(1) To liberate the European nations from the Fascist invaders and give them every aid towards the restoration of their national states, destroyed by their oppressors. The French, Belgian, Czechoslovak, Polish, Greek and other nations suffering under Nazi domination to be freed and to regain their independence.

(2) To give the liberated nations full rights and independence so that they themselves could decide on the form of their State administration.

(3) To punish all war criminals wherever they might be.

(4) To restore order in Europe and make new German aggression impossible.

(5) To build up lasting economic, political, and cultural co-operation between the European nations upon the foundations of mutual trust and assistance and renew the economy and culture destroyed by the Germans.

These words from Marshal Stalin were cheered in secret all over Nazi-dominated Europe; they also created among the great war Allies a new hope for lasting post-war co-operation.

Dr. Beneš eventually arrived in Moscow in December 1943 to take part in the final negotiations on the treaty with the Soviet Union. Visiting Teheran, Baku and Stalingrad on the way, he saw the immeasurable damage and destruction caused by the war. On several occasions since that journey the President has stated how impressed he was by this evidence of the heroic stand of the Russian people.

The text of the treaty had been discussed during the conference of the four Foreign Ministers in Teheran. Later, however, the original wording was changed at the Soviet request in agreement with the Czechoslovak Ambassador to Moscow, Mr. Fierlinger. This prolonged the duration of the treaty from five to twenty years, and its ratification was now to be immediate. These amendments were explained as signs of Soviet goodwill.

Apart from his negotiations with Marshal Stalin and other Soviet representatives who seem to have evinced a sound appreciation of Czechoslovakia's needs and problems, Dr. Beneš had another delicate task to fulfil during his stay in Moscow—that of winning the Czech Communist leaders, who had established their headquarters in the U.S.S.R., for sincere co-operation with the London Government both during and after the war. Perhaps

the most important outcome of his efforts in this direction was the agreement reached between the political refugees in the West and the political exiles in Moscow, that the war would end as far as Czechoslovakia was concerned with a revolutionary uprising against the oppressors, which at the same time would ensure the just punishment of all who had betrayed their national duties and collaborated with the enemy. To further this aim it was suggested that the establishment of new administrative bodies should be encouraged while the war was still on. They would take over public functions as soon as the command was given and in this way the Czechoslovaks would be in control of their own affairs when the German front collapsed—if not before. They would be known as "National Committees", and although necessarily of a conspiratorial nature at first, it was imperative, Dr. Beneš realised, that citizens of all political beliefs should serve on them.

The only matter on which agreement was not reached in Moscow during Dr. Beneš's visit was the extent of Communist participation in the London Government. At that time Mr. Gottwald, the representative of the Communist group in Moscow, considered this "unnecessary". There appeared to be no eagerness to share the responsibility of a Government in exile.

On the return journey from Moscow to London Dr. Beneš was invited to Marakesch, in Africa, to visit Mr. Churchill, to whom he reported the results of his negotiations with the Soviet leaders. As a result, it was suggested that the Polish Government would also be wise to seek an agreement with the Kremlin. Stalin had already indicated as much, so General Sikorsky was eventually persuaded to go to Russia.

The B.B.C. and Radio Moscow broadcast many appeals that National Committees should be set up all over Czechoslovakia to take over the administration of liberated territories. The appeals were not made in vain. The patriot news bulletins transmitted secretly to London told of a surprisingly quick response at home. Details of the organisation of the committees were kept so closely from the Germans that in many towns two or three Committees worked on parallel lines without knowing of each other's existence. Meanwhile in Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia the situation slowly became ripe for action. The Red Army had been close to the border for some time.

Mr. Němec, the Minister of Reconstruction and Commerce in the London Government, was entrusted with a new appointment.<sup>1</sup> He was to be governmental delegate with ministerial powers for the liberated territories, and would set up the first

<sup>1</sup>His successor was Mr. Václav Majer, a member of the Social Democrat Party

post-war local administration by co-ordinating the activities of the National Committees and taking over responsibility from the Red Army as soon as the progress of the liberation permitted civil administration. Together with the members of his mission he arrived in Ruthenia in October 1944.

The Slovak patriots, who had been active throughout the war and had been closely in contact with the émigré Government in London by radio and courier, had informed London they would probably launch their offensive at the beginning of September. They expected active support from Czechoslovak airborne units trained in Soviet Russia, particularly the Second Airborne Brigade under the command of General Příkryl. They also hoped for air coverage by Czechoslovak squadrons already stationed on liberated territory in Soviet Russia and Poland, close to the centre of the uprising, which was intended to disrupt the communications in the German rear along the Carpathians and to get control of Slovakia by successive stages.

There were many reasons for thinking that this operation, big as it was, would succeed. The terrain was carefully selected to include as many of the supply depots provided for the "independent" Slovak Army as possible. An airport was to be seized in the first stages of the attack and active support from several of the larger units of the Slovak Army was also assured. More units under commanders who could be relied upon to join the patriots were concentrated round Baňská Bystrica, the focal point of the uprising, and additional ammunition and food were being stored to ensure supplies until help could be sent by air, or until the advance units of the Red Army could be contacted. The sabotage of the existing Slovak regime went so far that large reserves of newly printed banknotes were stored on behalf of the patriots in Baňská Bystrica. When the preparations were in their final stages it was suddenly announced from the headquarters of the German Army in Bratislava that the threatening advance of the Bolsheviks called for special arrangements in Slovakia. New units were therefore brought in by the Germans to strengthen the defence of the country.

The alarm was signalled in the underground headquarters of the Slovak patriots. Two more weeks were needed to complete the plans for the uprising. Had it been betrayed, or was it really the critical situation at the front that caused this decision by the Nazi Command?

"Now or never!" was the answer of the Slovak patriots.

Baňská Bystrica was occupied almost without opposition. The rising was very successful at the start. More and more units joined the patriots, and within two weeks a considerable part of central Slovakia was under their control.

But the German Command retaliated quickly. Reinforcements rushed to Slovakia and three armoured S.S. divisions waiting to be posted to the Eastern Front were transferred to the danger area. Ten German divisions were quickly concentrated on the task of suppressing this dangerous rebellion.

While the Red Army was approaching Košice, the capital of eastern Slovakia (which was to become the first seat of the Czechoslovak Government on liberated soil), the patriots' transmitter in Baňská Bystrica broadcast a declaration, announcing the rebirth of the Czechoslovak Republic, and ending with the words: "Long live the new, united, and inseparable democratic Czechoslovak Republic, the joint home of all Czechs and Slovaks!" It was not the only transmission over Radio Baňská Bystrica. The appeals for help, for reinforcements, for supplies, became more frequent and more pressing. In this crucial time the patriots asked each other again and again:

"Where are the spearheads of the Red Army, and the Czechoslovak units commanded by General Svoboda?" General Svoboda and his men had reached the Dukla pass on 6th October 1944. This was to the north, on the Polish-Slovak border.

A governmental delegation from London headed by Dr. Drtina, President Beneš's political secretary, and consisting of Msgr. Hala, the chief of Prime Minister Sramek's Cabinet, two members of the State Council in London, Dr. Uhlíř and Mr. Laušman, and Mr. Slánský and Mr. Šverma from Moscow, arrived on the spot in Baňská Bystrica and were soon convinced that help was urgently needed if the uprising was to survive the terrific German pressure.

Dr. Drtina and Dr. Uhlíř flew to London to explain the situation. President Beneš decided to take it up with Moscow.

Back in Baňská Bystrica, the airport of Tři Duby (Three Oaks) suddenly bustled with activity. Help had come. General Příkryl's Second Airborne Brigade had landed. Close behind came U.S. and British liaison officers, and with this support the lost ground was won back step by step. More help was needed. Where was the promised supply from the West of medicaments, mobile hospitals, concentrated foods and other necessities? In London plans went ahead for the loading of these requirements on seventy bombers, which would make the journey in two stages, first to Italy and then to the airport of Tři Duby. Another urgent message was sent to London, but in vain. The patriots, fighting valiantly as long as hope remained, did not then know that the fate of the Slovak uprising had been decided long before—in Teheran!

In November 1943, at their famous meeting, the statesmen of the three leading powers decided that Poland, Czechoslovakia,

Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania and Hungary would be the Red Army's sphere of operation and liberation. The decision was taken without consulting the smaller Allied Governments. They learned of it only when it was too late. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the import of the Teheran decision became known during the Slovak uprising.

President Roosevelt, in spite of repeated warnings by Mr. Churchill, was in favour of the decision. Mr. Churchill gave way in the matter only on grounds of strategical necessity in the light in which it was presented by Soviet and other allied military experts. The progress of the war proved later how much at the time of Teheran the Allies underestimated their own strength in connection with the Second Front, which it was decided should be opened in the spring or at the latest in the summer of 1944. The strategical decisions taken at that meeting were not made public until February 1945, and even then it was merely stated that "Complete agreement had been reached on new and more powerful blows to be struck by the Allied armies and air forces from the east, west, north and south".

It is natural that at the time of the Slovak uprising, initiated and carried out mainly by Slovak patriots, its political aspects were carefully observed and calculated in Moscow. What an analogy with the uprising in Warsaw! Was the Red Army to be deprived of its final spectacular successes, after battering its way from Stalingrad to the Carpathians, or to the banks of the Vistula? If the Slovak uprising succeeded it might stir patriots in the Bohemian countries to similar action; it would also speed up the progress of the liberation armies of the West. How far might their advance go, and what would be the resulting political reactions in the territories they occupied?

With scrupulous attention to the commitments they had made in Moscow the Western Allies took every precaution to avoid transgressing their agreed sphere of activities. They were willing and even anxious to send supplies to the Slovak patriots, the supplies that had already been prepared in Britain for that sole purpose—if the Soviet High Command gave its consent—but the Soviet withheld consent.

Towards the end of October the German units were hammering at the remnants of the heroic units of the Slovak uprising. General Viest, who had flown from London to take command, was taken prisoner, together with General Golian, and disappeared. Whether he was executed by the Germans, immediately and secretly, as was suggested long after the war was over, or whether he was held prisoner and later liberated by the Red Army, has never been conclusively proved. At all events, he was not seen again.

General Příkryl, the Commander of the Second Airborne Brigade that had come to the rescue several weeks earlier, decided to continue his struggle in the mountains, and, surrounded by his most faithful men, he managed to survive the winter in inaccessible mountain hideouts. In the spring he fought his way through until he reached the spearhead of the Red Army. With him were two of the three M.P.s who had been the remaining members of the governmental delegation, Mr. Laušman and Mr. Slánský. The third, Mr. Šverma, died from exhaustion during one of the many forced marches the partisan survivors had been compelled to make to save their lives.

In Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, while the epic struggle of the Slovak patriots was being crushed, the mission of Mr. Němec, the governmental delegate for liberated territories, was nearing its end. From the beginning co-operation with the Red Army Command had been possible only on a very small scale. From the Russian side there appeared to be neither need of it nor desire for it. To Mr. Němec, who had hoped for sincere understanding with the great Soviet Ally, this was mystifying as well as disappointing. He told me, however, that there was no hint at first that Ruthenia was not to remain an inseparable part of the Czechoslovak Republic. In fact on 29th October 1944, soon after his arrival, he and Mr. Turjanica, the Communist Chairman of the Ruthenian National Council, jointly addressed a big rally in Chust, the provisional capital of Ruthenia. Turjanica spoke warmly and energetically of the unity of the Czechoslovak Republic. This was in keeping with his articles in the Communist weekly *Pravda*, printed in Baňská Bystrica, during the Slovak uprising. In a matter of days, however, the Communist Party took a completely new attitude, following the lead of a systematic campaign suddenly inaugurated and carried out from the Soviet transmitter in Kiev, attacking the Czechoslovak Republic and demanding the separation of Carpatho-Ruthenia, to enable it to join the Soviet Republics. At the same time over the entire territory Ruthenian men and boys were forcibly recruited into the Red Army. Both these actions directly contravened the policy followed hitherto by Mr. Němec and his mission, in agreement with the Communist Party, and in accordance with the Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty, by which the Czechoslovak administration was being re-established and co-ordinated with the work of the local National Committees. The demand that Ruthenia should be separated from the Republic did not in any way originate from the population of the territory concerned—it was merely taken up by a handful of political agitators representing the Communist Party. Mr. Němec described to me how incredible it seemed to him, when he was suddenly

confronted with a delegation headed by Turjanica, purporting to represent the National Council of Ruthenia—a provisional administrative body—and handed an ultimatum demanding that he should leave Ruthenian territory within three days, together with all military and civilian employees of the mission.

"They told me," said Mr. Němec, "that the National Council had decided to separate Ruthenia from the Czechoslovak Republic and join the Soviet Republics. I refused to accept the ultimatum and declared that it was my duty, in accordance with the Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty, to work for the restoration of the State administration."

Further steps were taken to force the Czechoslovak Minister to leave. Since his only means of communication with London or Moscow was via the Red Army field telegraph, it was quickly and easily interrupted. He was forced to resort to flying to Moscow by Red Army plane to negotiate with the Soviet authorities and to get in touch with Dr. Beneš through the Czechoslovak Embassy. On arrival he was invited to discuss the matter with Molotov and Vyshinsky. Without any preliminaries Molotov declared that, according to a decision taken by the Congress of National Committees of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, Ruthenia should be joined to the Soviet Union. It was impossible for the Soviet Union to remain deaf to this appeal from one of its Slav brother nations.

This statement by the Soviet Foreign Minister, which was a violation of all existing pacts and declarations of friendship between Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia, not only sealed the fate of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, but also closed one of the most dramatic chapters of the struggle for Czechoslovak independence within her pre-Munich frontiers.

For the Czechoslovak Government in London this turn of events was totally unexpected. The Military Information Department of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in London, headed by Colonel Vlček, of which I had been a member since June 1943, was entrusted early in 1943 with the preparation of an atlas of the Czechoslovak Republic with her pre-Munich frontiers. The restoration of those frontiers was the chief war aim of all fighting Czechoslovaks on the Western as on the Eastern Front. Of the thousands of Ruthenians settled in Soviet Russia, two-thirds died fighting in the ruthless battles on the approaches to the Carpathian Mountains. In their minds had been a constant vision of a free Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, reunited with the Czechoslovak Republic, so well depicted in the Atlas, which, incidentally, was intended for use at the Peace Conference. The pre-war frontiers of Czechoslovakia had been accepted by the Western Allies, and, it was thought, by the Soviet Union, since

the repudiation of Munich. Soon after the Atlas was ready in 1944, however, it had to be withdrawn from circulation, as Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia had been marked on it as Czechoslovak territory! Shortly before I left Prague, in March 1948, after the *coup d'état*, thousands of copies of the atlas were still stored in the filing cabinets lining the walls of the corridor in the Information Section of the Foreign Ministry.

It can now be said without hesitation that the failure of the uprising in Warsaw, and in Slovakia, and the failure of Mr. Němec's mission in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, caused President Beneš and his Government to return home to Czechoslovakia via Moscow. The fate of the uprising in Prague was still unwritten, but even with a Russian pact in his pocket, signed and ratified in Moscow in 1943, Dr. Beneš was not sure of his own return to Prague. He went to fight for it. If he had not, Czechoslovakia could have had no other alternative than to succumb to pressure to become a Communist satellite immediately.

The second exile in the President's life lasted five and a half years before he reached Czechoslovak soil again. His Government, negotiated and agreed upon in Moscow, was set up on home territory for the first time in the chief town of eastern Slovakia, Košice, where the Governmental programme prepared in Moscow was proclaimed. Both Government and programme were henceforth referred to as the Government and Programme of Košice. At that time Prague was still in German hands.

In the Government, which was headed by Mr. Fierlinger, who declared himself as a Social Democrat, the Communist element was very well represented. Before the war the Communist Party never polled more than 10 per cent of the total vote, and her present increased representation was based on the insistence of Mr. Gottwald, the General Secretary, that the "whole nation" had been inspired by Soviet Russia's leadership in the war and by its major share in the defeat of Germany, so that the sympathies of the nation would naturally go with the leftist Marxist parties, that is, the Communists and Social Democrats, in the next elections. It was he who demanded that the Prime Minister be chosen from the ranks of these two parties. So the choice fell on the former Ambassador to the Kremlin, Mr. Fierlinger. It is true that Mr. Masaryk, a non-party man, was still the Minister of Foreign Affairs. But he was given a Communist Under Secretary of State, Mr. Clementis. Five of the six permitted parties, that is, the Czech Communist, Czech Socialist, Catholic, Slovak Communist and Slovak Democratic, had one of the posts of Vice-Prime Minister allotted to them. By not merging, the Czech and Slovak Communist Parties therefore held two of these posts. The parties which before the war had formed the extreme



right, such as the Agrarian Party, the Party of National Union, the Tradesmen's Party and, of course, the Fascist Party, all of whom had been branded with collaboration, were not permitted to reorganise. It was under these conditions that the first post-war Government was set up on 4th April.<sup>1</sup>

Not only was the Communist Party the best represented in the Government, but it also controlled the key ministries, such as that of the Interior, which brought the police under its command; Information, which gave it the control of the press and radio; and Agriculture, with an excellent opportunity of influencing the country people, whose own party, the strongest before the war, had disappeared.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Fierlinger, though a professed Social Democrat, from the beginning left no doubt that he would support the Communist Party in every possible way. This was not surprising, since he owed his appointment to Mr. Gottwald. The reactions of the weak and inexperienced Minister of National Defence, General Svoboda, were similar. Both had been humiliated during the war by the Kremlin. Fierlinger, who was given notice in 1940 that if he wanted to remain in Moscow he could do so only as a private person, was deprived of all diplomatic privileges, and left for Britain where he stayed until he was returned to office after the outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Germany. General Svoboda came to Russia as a lieutenant-colonel and was interned with his men after being taken prisoner in 1939 during the Russian advance into Poland, where the Czechoslovaks were forming an independent unit to fight side by side with the Poles. His command before the war

*Prime Minister*  
*Vice-Prime Ministers*

Zdenek Fierlinger  
Josef David  
\*Klement Gottwald  
\*Vilam Siroký  
Msgr. Jan Šrámek  
Ján Ursiny  
Jan Masaryk  
General Ludvík Svoboda  
Dr. Vavro Šrobár  
General Antonín Hasal  
\*Václav Nosek  
\*Július Duriš  
\*Dr. Zdenek Nejedlý  
\*Václav Kopecký  
\*Dr. Josef Šoltész  
Dr. Hubert Ripka  
Dr. Jaroslav Stránský  
Dr. Ivan Pictor  
Dr. Adolf Procházka  
Msgr. František Hála  
\*Dr. Vladimír Clementis  
Ján Lachner  
Col. Mikuláš Ferjenčík

Social Democrat  
Czech National Socialist  
Czech Communist  
Slovak Communist  
Catholic  
Slovak Democrat  
Non-party  
Non-party  
Non party  
Non party  
Czech Communist  
Slovak Communist  
Czech Communist  
Czech Communist  
Slovak Communist  
National Socialist  
National Socialist  
Slovak Democrat  
Catholic  
Catholic  
Slovak Communist  
Slovak Democrat  
Non-party.

*Minister of Foreign Affairs*  
*National Defence*  
*Finance*  
*Transport*  
*Interior*  
*Agriculture*  
*Education*  
*Information*  
*Social Welfare*  
*Foreign Trade*  
*Justice*  
*Home Trade*  
*Health*  
*Posts*  
*U. Secretary of Foreign Affairs*  
*Foreign Trade*  
*National Defence*

had been with a battalion somewhere in the provinces, and later his job was to teach Hungarian at the Military High School. After the German attack on Soviet Russia he rose to command the Czechoslovak units on the Eastern Front.

This, then, was the Government that declared the Košice programme and whose initial task it was first to prepare for the first post-war elections, from which the National Assembly would emerge to give the nation its new constitution, and secondly to carry out nationalisation and land and social reforms.

The Communist Party, in particular, stressed the importance of the National Committees, which, following the agreement made by Dr. Beneš in Moscow, and the subsequent radio appeals that they should be established, had their beginnings as part of the underground movement, developing until at the appropriate moment they could take over the reins of local government from the bodies functioning under the German administration. It was planned that the same function would be carried out in big undertakings by the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, which would be organised on similar lines to the Committees for that purpose. Mr. Gottwald urged this far-reaching penetration at an early stage—in his own words:

"If we manage to establish National Committees everywhere, in every locality, in every undertaking, even in sport or cultural organisations, when the command for an uprising is given the Germans will be helpless. Language difficulties alone have prevented their administration from penetrating every branch of public life. Thus the Germans will suddenly be facing an organisation which they cannot possibly subordinate. The ensuing panic will disrupt the whole governing system of the oppressors."

The strategic and, later, the organisational value of the National Committees was beyond dispute; but the political character they acquired during their establishment might well determine the future political trend of the country. For this reason it was decided, during the final preparations for the setting up of the National Committees in their post-war form, that each political party would have equal representation on them after liberation.

The advance of the Red Army on Czechoslovak territory was slowed down by stubborn German resistance which had no other object than to play for time. As soon as they realised that the war was lost, the retreating Germans had just one aim—to be captured by the Americans. They could secure this only if the German defence on the Eastern Front remained strong enough to prevent a sudden collapse.

While the Red Army was still fighting its way forward near Brno, the capital of Moravia, the people of Prague rose in arms.

The National Committee, led by Professor Albert Prazak of the Charles University, empowered General Kuttelwascher to call into action his partisan organisation formed in the underground movement. It took the Germans by surprise. The patriots quickly overpowered the small detachment of S.S. guards stationed in the Radio Building. Their numbers were increased by the Czech members of Protectorate Police Force and they were soon masters in their own town. This was on May the 5th and 6th.

The Reichswehr barracks defence system swung into action, and strong detachments of S.S. units were entrusted with the protection and evacuation of German women and children. At the same time the patriots in control of the Radio Building had not only notified their allies in the East and West of their initial successes, but had also attracted the attention of General Schorner's units stationed south of Prague, and caused him to send tank columns to restore order.

Here again the radio played a decisive role. Instructions were broadcast ordering the erection of barricades at all approaches to prevent German reinforcements from entering Prague. Men, women and children helped to tear up the cobblestones in the streets. In this hour of danger the people of Prague showed the greatest heroism in the defence of their city. Most of their weapons had to be captured barehanded from the Germans before the volunteer units were ready for action.

Their determination to shake off the hateful Nazi rule, under which they had suffered for more than six years, helped them to accomplish miracles. Here and there a mere handful of poorly-armed civilians stormed and captured important positions in the city. The Germans retaliated with great cruelty. They collected women and children and ordered them to march in front of their tanks or infantrymen to protect them from the patriot fire. German snipers were active, and in time the German resistance became better organised and more efficient. The patriots' supply of ammunition ran short.

Radio Prague was constantly broadcasting calls for help. A British prisoner of war rescued from the Germans was brought in to make the appeals in English. They were addressed to General Eisenhower. A group of negotiators escaped from encircled Prague and contacted the spearheads of the Third U.S. Army, which were reported to be somewhere near Plzeň, only fifty miles from the capital. The only hindrance to their further advance was the columns of German troops retreating towards the U.S. zone.

At one time the situation was saved by General Vlasov's armoured units stationed near Prague. He was in command of the so-called "Russian Liberation Army" which was composed

entirely of Russian prisoners who were prepared to occupy their own country after victory by the Nazis. General Vlassov, who saw that Germany had lost the war, tried at the last minute to save himself and his men by turning their weapons against the Germans. He painted Czechoslovak flags on his tanks and vehicles and presented them with an ultimatum. He dared not wait, however, for the Red Army columns, although they were still well over a hundred miles away, and disappeared as quickly as he had come in the direction of the American lines. New fighting flared up and German pressure was directed mainly against the Radio Building not far from the Wenceslaus Square, Prague's main thoroughfare. The broadcast calls for help became more and more frequent and despairing. When Czech, English and Russian announcers were giving the position of the airfields where airborne infantry could land, the patriot guard at the main entry was overpowered, artillery fire was concentrated on the building, and hand-to-hand fighting reached the doors next to the studio, which even then was not stormed and captured by the Germans.

In the meantime General Eisenhower was doing his best to save Prague. He was urged to do this by Mr. Churchill. General Patton's Third Army could have liberated the whole of Bohemia without much opposition had the Soviet High Command given its consent. At the end of April General Deane, the Chief of the U.S. Military Mission in Moscow, had proposed to the Soviet High Command that the Third Army should halt its advance on a line corresponding roughly with Czechoslovakia's pre-Munich boundaries, unless the military situation should be exceptionally favourable and the line could be pushed forward to positions level with Carlsbad, Plzeň and Budějovice. No objection was made. Just over a week later, in view of the appeals from Radio Prague and the distance still to be covered by the Red Army (the advance columns were near Dresden in the north and in Moravia in the east), General Eisenhower sent through General Deane a further urgent proposal that advance units of the U.S. Forces should relieve Prague of the now acute German pressure. This suggestion was rejected without hesitation by General Antonov of the Soviet High Command who went as far as to remark that the Red Army must be the first to enter Prague—that a delay of a few days did not matter.

This reply was clear enough. In order not to worsen relations with the Russians, General Patton and his men were halted. At that time they were only ten to fifteen miles from the outskirts of Prague and a small group of reconnaissance tanks and cars had penetrated the Prague suburb of Košře, where the enthusiastic population quickly cleared away the barriers put up to

impede the entry of the German tanks. The U.S. tanks were now recalled, much to the disappointment of the people and of the U.S. officers and men themselves, to whom this change in tactics was inexplicable. The American forces then retreated back to a line between Plzeň and Rokycany, about forty miles from Prague.

So the city, though in fact already free, had to wait for formal liberation by the Red Army on 9th May 1945, the day after V.E.-day was celebrated in most of the formerly enslaved European capitals.

The struggle on the European battlefield began and ended in Prague, which was the first city enslaved and the last to be freed. The war in the ether also began and ended there.

The "radio war" actually began in 1934 with the operation of a black transmitter some thirty-five miles south of Prague by the German anti-Nazi, Dr. Formis, who was eventually silenced by a gang of Reichswehr killers who came from Germany. It ended on the morning of 9th May 1945 in the fighting for the Prague broadcasting building from which were transmitted hundreds of messages, orders and appeals without precedent in their dramatic tension. Some seventy patriots alone gave their lives in the battle for Radio Prague, bringing the total number of victims of the uprising to nearly five thousand in four days. Was it all necessary?

In one of his excellent articles, Dr. Drábek, the Chief State Prosecutor, asked: "Who liberated Prague?" He gave the answer himself—that the glorious achievements of the Red Army need not be spoiled by a claim that every citizen of Prague could witness was not true.

The article was afterwards challenged by a statement signed "Four Soviet Colonels" who claimed that the U.S. Army had intentionally turned deaf ears to the cries for help, so that the Nazis could exterminate the leaders of the uprising, who were said to be mainly Communists, and so that the Western Powers could establish a reactionary Government in Prague (no mention was made of the Košice Government about to set out for Prague from Slovakia).

After the end of the war the Communist Minister of Education never permitted reference, in connection with the uprising, to the name of the Russian General Vlassov, who without doubt was a traitor, but who averted greater disaster from Prague when, in the crucial time of the uprising, he turned with his German-equipped troops against the Germans, withdrawing before the Red Army arrived.

Regardless of the American liberation of Western Bohemia, the men of the Red Army were applauded as the sole liberators of the country and the capital. No hint was given even that ten to twelve

thousand Rumanians died on Czechoslovak territory. These represented a considerable part of their hundred thousand-strong army fighting side by side with the Russians

Since the facts behind the liberation were not known, the Red Army men who entered Prague became very popular for the time being with the inhabitants, who could breathe freely for the first time after so many years. A number of Russians lost their lives in disposing of the last scattered groups of S S and other German troops

Those Germans who had not fled in the last phase of the war or during the uprising, unless they were known to be anti-Nazi, were now rounded up and sent to transit camps to await their transfer or repatriation. Those who were associated directly with the Nazi movement were made to start work immediately on clearing away the débris caused by the damage done during the revolution

On 14th May the President and his Government returned to Prague, which gave them a great welcome. The spots where the thousands of patriots had fallen during the fighting were covered with flowers, and candles burned there at night, in contrast with the many scenes of happy celebration

As so often before the war, the day after Beneš's arrival the townspeople gathered on the Old Town Square where, on his monument, Jan Hus, medieval reformer and warrior, stood gazing sadly on the ruins of the thirteenth-century Gothic Town Hall, the pride of Prague, destroyed together with many adjoining houses during the early days of May. There President Beneš gave his first address

"In 1938 the Western World did us a great wrong internationally. Let it be stated that by this war it has made good that grave injustice. The wrong done to us was wiped out. Let us be grateful to Britain who in one phase of the war had to stand alone against the tremendous German onslaught, thus saving the world from German destruction. Let us be thankful to the United States for their tremendous war effort which saved the democracies and resulted in our victories. Let us remember gratefully Stalin and the Red Army, Churchill and Roosevelt, for all they have done for humanity in this war. Let us not forget France and all the other allies. They all deserve our full recognition and gratitude."

The units of the Czechoslovak Army who had fought their way home from Central Russia, and forced their way into Kiev and other Russian Ukrainian and even Polish towns, waging their hardest battles in the vicinity of the Dukla Pass on the Slovak border, with enormous losses, were welcomed with the same enthusiasm as the crowds showed for President Beneš, who, just

as his predecessor had been named the President Liberator, was already described as the President Constructor.

The Czechoslovaks who had fought on the Western Front and in Africa had reached Western Bohemia from Dunkirk, where the Armoured Brigade had fenced in the remaining German pocket on the Atlantic coast. They waited near Plzeň some days before their victory parade could be arranged in Prague.<sup>1</sup>

In Plzeň I had been told that, without a Russian permit, I could not go to Prague, that is, unless I risked not getting out again. I talked it over with my companions, Alexandro Frank of the Italian section of Radio Luxembourg, and Mr. Dorsay of Columbia University, who was in charge of the recording team. We had no idea where to get the permit, and anyway there was no time to be lost. We hunted down a translator in the Town Hall of Plzeň and in no time he produced a wonderful copy of our American orders written in Russian. It was franked with an impressive-looking Town Hall stamp, and marked "Urgent" and "Registered". Then it was carefully inserted in a celluloid map-case.

It worked! The Russian sentry who stopped us at the demarcation line between the U.S. and Soviet forces near Rokycany was completely satisfied. It carried us past the guards for the second time when we entered the outskirts of Prague, where I had a mission I could not risk failing to fulfil.

My aim was to interview President Beneš and record his appeal to the 800,000 Czechoslovaks in Germany to stay put until organised repatriation could begin—and to return with this recording as soon as possible to Luxembourg and get it on the air without delay.

I leave aside what it meant to return to one's native city after six years of exile with the prospect of leaving it again in a few hours, with scarcely time to seek out relatives and friends of whom one still knew nothing.

We arrived in Prague at eleven a.m. I spoke with the President's Chancellor on the telephone some ten minutes later, and before twelve o'clock our convoy passed another Soviet guard and stopped in the third courtyard of the Prague castle in front of the Presidential office.

Incidentally it was 28th May, the President's sixty-first birthday. That day was split into minutes for the first citizen of Czechoslovakia who had to cope with all the State affairs which had piled up in the first fortnight of his return to Prague. Delegations were lining the corridors leading to the President's

<sup>1</sup>On my way from Luxembourg, where I had been posted to SIIAEF (Radio Luxembourg), from Dunkirk, a month earlier, I joined their columns, as they neared the capital, with my little convoy of radio recording cars.

office, when we entered in dust-covered uniforms, leaving no doubt that we had travelled a long road from Western Europe.

It seemed to me at that time that our chances of seeing Beneš were almost non-existent, let alone getting a message to him, to obtain his agreement to prepare a speech and make the recording. The unbelievable happened. Dr. Drtina, the President's political secretary during the war, whom I knew from London, spoke for us. The technical arrangements were carried out in Dr. Beneš's office while he was lunching, and the recording set was ready at three o'clock.

Dr. Beneš, whom I had last seen in England in the summer of 1944 when he was reviewing the Army before its departure for the Continent, came in smiling. He was obviously in birthday mood. We told him about Germany and especially of the Czechoslovaks who had been transported there as slave labour during the war. He wanted to hear all the details about the camps in Trier, Wiesbaden, Wetzlar and elsewhere, which we had visited, and was especially anxious to learn what was the morale of the deported people, what were their hopes and their expectations from the Government as well as from himself.

"As a journalist I am used to reporting facts as they are, Mr. President."

"That is just what I want to hear," he replied, and added with a twinkle in his eye, "People sometimes think I need only be told what will please me—it is well meant, of course."

"Our people in Germany are very impatient—they want to get home as soon as possible. They are tired of being in Germany separated from their families and often without any news of them."

"That is to be expected," said Dr. Beneš. "But if they try to return without the help of the authorities who are making special arrangements, the consequences might be very dangerous."

"We should like to help them realise why they must be patient. They were all delighted to know you had arrived back in Prague, but their first question was whether you knew what situation they were in. Therefore we should like to tell them that you do know—and that everything possible is being done to organise their return home. If you have any other message for them, Mr. President, which you could add, it would make a big difference to their morale."

To convince our listeners that the President was really aware of the conditions in Germany, I repeated, in front of the microphone, some of the comments I had made to him, and conveyed to him the greetings sent from the Czechoslovaks in the camps in Germany. Then Dr. Beneš took over himself.



He told them that just on this day, which was such a joyous anniversary for him, he wanted to stress that it was one of the primary tasks of his Government, and of the whole nation, that those who had suffered the ordeal of forced labour for the Germans should be enabled to return home with the minimum of delay and discomfort. "My Government," he said, "is working for the solution of this problem in complete understanding and co-operation with the American, British and Soviet authorities, and no stone will be left unturned until the last of you is home again. We need you all. An enormous task lies ahead of us—to rebuild what the war has destroyed, and to bring the whole country and the nation back to the road to prosperity. We cannot succeed in this task without you."

Dr Beneš's address brought our mission in Prague to a successful climax. His secretary, Dr Dolansky, had already looked in twice, to remind the President of the increasing number of visitors and delegations waiting outside. I ventured to ask one more question.

"Can you tell me, Mr President, as a soldier who followed you to the West, and now home again, what is your opinion about the future of our country?"

Dr Beneš thought for a moment. He was standing near me, and as he looked at me I felt suddenly conscious of my dusty uniform. Then he replied:

"I believe in the future of our country. I believe it will again be a strong, independent and democratic republic." He paused, and added—"Otherwise I should not be here!"<sup>1</sup>

That answer was definite. We shook hands and the President left. We began to clear away our complicated equipment. Only then did we notice that we had been with him for a whole hour. As we left the castle I felt sorry for the people waiting to be received—but we had taken up the President's time in a good cause.

In the evening and on into the night I was dashing about the streets of Prague. I visited the house I had once lived in, and then the editorial offices of my paper *Lidové Noviny*. It was a sad visit. Josef Čapek, the painter, and brother of Karel, the famous author, had died in a concentration camp. He and his brother had

<sup>1</sup>At that time Dr Beneš certainly still believed in the possibility of co-operation with Soviet Russia and in a peaceful understanding between East and West. Dr Jaroslav Stránský, who as a member of the Governmental delegation accompanied him to Moscow in the spring of 1945, described to me their last meeting with Stalin. He said: "During a farewell dinner in the Kremlin, Stalin, in his toast, stressed that he did not want the Slav countries to copy the Soviet regime. Mutual understanding should give each of them the opportunity to arrange their internal affairs according to their own needs. The world does not believe us in this," remarked Stalin. He turned to Beneš and added jokingly, "Nor do you," Dr Beneš. The President expressed his polite disagreement and everyone laughed happily, hoping for the best! It was Mr Vyshinsky, Dr Stránský's neighbour, who translated the whole conversation into French for him, since it had been made in Russian.

both been on the staff of the paper. Kladiva, one of the most popular editors, whom everyone called uncle, had been tortured to death in Dresden. He had been forced to eat a combination of salt, pepper and paprika in the hope that he would betray himself when given nothing to drink. He went mad and died in agony. Ferdinand Peroutka, Ivan Herben and others were still missing, having been dragged away to Germany.

The next morning we left and drove hard, taking turns at the wheel. We were in Luxembourg in twenty-four hours and the message went over to the D.P. camps in Germany in the next Czech relay. As I listened to the inspiring voice of Dr. Beneš I recalled that over the same network in Germany on 26th September 1938 the Fuehrer had uttered his challenge to Dr. Beneš.

"Here am I and there is Beneš. There is no peace between us. Only one of us will survive!"

The war was over and Dr. Beneš was addressing his people over the German radio network.

Where was Hitler?

Just then the units of the Czechoslovak Army from the West were presenting themselves to the citizens of Prague. Three hundred Cromwell and Sherman tanks roared over the cobblestones, followed by the motorised infantry units, and artillery and mechanised services. It was a sight to gladden the eyes of the waiting crowds, to whom the Western regalia of war was still unfamiliar. The units from the East, by no fault of their own, had little to compare with it. The glamour of the Western Army stole the day.

## Sovietisation

*"A State which does not protect itself from Communist penetration is like a man who tenders his throat to the knife."*

W. J. BROWN, M.P.

THE FIRST phases of the national, political and economic revival developed under the protection of the two occupying powers, Soviet Russia, with more than nine-tenths of the whole of Czechoslovakia under her control, and the United States, maintaining her units in Western Bohemia with Plzeň as the largest town. One cannot avoid feeling how shortsighted were the Western Allies in not ensuring that at least two of the armies of liberation, the American from the west, as well as the Soviet from the east, entered the capital. The magnitude of this lost opportunity in a country so orientated to the West as Czechoslovakia has been apparent ever since the outbreak of the Prague uprising. Its significance increased day by day until it was misused with great skill by the Communist Party in the election campaign in 1946. By now it has probably penetrated the history books of Central Europe, written according to Soviet needs.

In the small western zone occupied by the U.S. Forces, the Czechoslovak Army of the west was soon the decisive administrative factor, while the Americans were satisfied with watching the behaviour of the German population, helping to restore communications, and bringing economic life back to normal as soon as possible. The U.S. Army not only maintained its own supplies but also provided for the Czechoslovak units. They paid in precious dollars for whatever goods the region was able to offer, and brought in surplus military material which was made available to the population. No war booty was collected, apart from the routine disposal of abandoned German war material—and again, whatever was of use for the population or the economy of the country was left untouched.

An entirely different story was recorded in the other military zone in Czechoslovakia—that occupied by the Red Army, which "lived on the land" in every possible sense. All its requirements, apart from military equipment unobtainable locally, had to be provided by the country. The army meat ration was fixed at an incredibly high level—one and a half to two pounds a head daily.

During this time of severe shortage of all kinds of food, while deliveries of U.N.R.R.A. goods were still in their initial stages, the waste of food in the army camps and barracks was deplorable. The loss sustained by the nation proved an almost intolerable burden.

The Red Army, working hand in glove with the Soviet political Commissars from the moment it arrived on Czechoslovak territory, became a very important political factor, and not only in a passive sense. The advance units carried with them a supply of Communist propaganda material printed in Czech and immediately contacted local Communist organisers through the medium of officers specially attached for this work. These gave instructions and help in the establishment of the local Communist Party groups.

Among the orders they distributed was a message which stated that, according to the Moscow agreement concluded with the Czechoslovak representatives, National Committees should be composed of 60 per cent Communist and 40 per cent non-Communist organs. This message, which was signed by a Czech called Steiner-Vesely, who later became Colonel of the Police, was pure invention. The National Committees established on this foundation had afterwards to be corrected with the greatest difficulty. All this was possible only because of the support the Communists enjoyed from the Red Army.

The Czechoslovak Government's task was the more difficult because from the very beginning there was no provision for serious co-operation by the Soviet occupation or liberation forces. The Soviet regime counted more on the incorporation of Czechoslovakia into Soviet Russia's embrace than on her independent economic and political recovery. A Czech M.P., now in exile, told me that in the first days of May 1945 a detachment of N.K.V.D. (Soviet Secret Police) arrived in Moravia under the command of Major Kovtun, accompanied by the former Czech Communist M.P., Captain Harus. After the liberation of Brno, they established their offices in two suburbs of the Moravian capital where they conducted countless interrogations. They seldom failed to bully their victims into partaking in the spreading of propaganda, advocating the incorporation of the country into the Soviet Union, which was explained as an economic and strategical necessity. They were to play up the idea of Slav brotherhood and similar reasoning to strengthen their influence. My friend the M.P. had to act at first as translator, but refused to go on with it as soon as he realised what was behind the "interrogation". In December 1945 Major Kovtun suddenly disappeared from Brno and the M.P. met him several months later in Prague, where he was acting as Professor of Chemistry

at the Russian College. That presumably was not the only duty of citizen Kovtun.

All equipment and supplies left by the Germans on Czechoslovak territory were declared by the Russians to be war booty. The dismantling of factories built during the war began at once and protests to the military authorities that many of the factories had been built by Czech capital and Czech labour were ignored. Eventually the Government had to intervene in Moscow and a curious decision was issued, to the effect that factories of Czech origin built during the war should be left untouched, or if already removed (as most of them had been) should be returned, "providing they were still on Czechoslovak territory".

A much advertised example of Soviet generosity was the "Stalin Plant" in Most—the German-built synthetic petrol refineries, where some forty to sixty thousand slave workers of all nationalities were employed during the war on distilling fuel from brown coal, which, in view of the limitations imposed by the resources both of manpower and of brown coal, was a luxury only necessitated by war. This plant, according to Soviet claims, was war-booty, regardless of its almost complete destruction by U.S. bombing attacks and repair and reconstruction, in a surprisingly short time, by Czech labour and ingenuity. Marshal Stalin, however, made a gesture. The plant would remain in Czechoslovakia! The Soviet negotiators exchanged it for the sole right of exploitation of the uranium ore mines at Jachymov, believed to be the largest on the Continent.

Another drain on the impoverished resources of the country was the system instigated by the Communist Party of making gifts of gratitude to Marshal Stalin and the Red Army. Whole trainloads of them were assembled. An eight-cylinder car made by Tatra was sent by air as a gift to the Marshal; then a train full of kitchen utensils; the first post-war series of radio receivers produced, and later on even the famous Hotel Imperial in Karlovy Vary (Karlbad) was presented to the Red Army. Marshal Koniev, the liberator of Prague, was rewarded with one of the most expensive and lavishly equipped villas in Prague's most fashionable quarter.

A colleague at the foreign office told me that the fever of donations to Stalin went so far that one day four wagons of special sand were offered through the Foreign Office to the Kremlin. He was afraid to reject it in case the donors were offended and made a political scandal out of it. He referred the case to the Secretary General of the Communist Party, Rudolph Slánský, who recognised the difficulties in delivering such a gift, and explained in a polite letter that there was not enough garden space at the Kremlin to permit the best use of such a donation.

These almost hysterical gestures of gratitude to the U.S.S.R., insisted upon by the Communist Party, did not stop with the half-a-million-pound hotel in Karlovy Vary. As soon as the provisional National Assembly had been established, by nomination only and without elections, though a certain parity of political parties was preserved, it sanctioned a proposal that no person or body then in existence had the right to authorise. It voted for the transfer of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia to Soviet Russia. On issues such as these, where claims by Russia were concerned, it was recognised by the non-Communist parties that no opposition of any kind was possible.

Throughout the war Ruthenians who were in Britain, as well as those who fled to Soviet Russia after the country was occupied by the Hungarians, were assured that if they entered the Czechoslovak Forces they would be fighting for the happy reunion of their homeland with the Republic. Even if there were complaints about the Government's lack of policy before the war in Slovakia, there was certainly no serious criticism of Czechoslovak rule in Ruthenia. This small country, backward by no fault of its own, some 13,000 kilometres square, with a population of about half a million, joined Czechoslovakia in 1919 after a thousand years of misrule by feudal Hungary. Czechoslovakia was proud of the decision taken by this small Slav nation, speaking a dialect almost equal to the Ukrainian language, and it spared no efforts or funds to raise Ruthenia's standard of living.

In 1919 the Ruthenians still had no schools where their own language was spoken. Technical development had barely penetrated the slopes of the Carpathians, and agriculture was two hundred years behind the times. The only pursuits were cattle grazing and the cottage industries connected with the extensive forests, except the large salt-mines, and even these were neglected.

After 1919 schools and hospitals were built, new factories, power plants and communications installed, and foreign trade negotiated. It need not be stressed that the tax revenue bore no comparison to the capital invested, which soon ran to billions of Czechoslovak crowns. When, twenty years later, in 1939, the Hungarians annexed the territory, they considered Uzhorod, the Ruthenian capital, a model town.

The Ruthenians were granted far-reaching self-administration in the time of the first Republic, and were proportionately represented in Parliament. By 1938 there emerged the first generation of Ruthenian intelligentsia for centuries. Teachers and officials particularly were grateful for what had been achieved. They proved their gratitude in 1938, during the crisis, when they renewed their allegiance to Czechoslovakia. They were cut off

completely when Slovakia, by Hitler's grace, declared her "independence".

After the Second World War the Ruthenian people, without being consulted, without a plebiscite of any kind, suffered the fate of the small Baltic countries—Soviet annexation.<sup>1</sup> An option was granted to Czechs and Slovaks still living in Ruthenia to remain in the newly-created Soviet Republic, or to return home. An overwhelming majority decided to leave. This proved difficult. They had to leave behind most of their possessions, and the compensation was negligible. The Ruthenians who fought with the armies in the West and who applied for permission to stay in Czechoslovakia were not even allowed to visit close relatives in Ruthenia—after an exile lasting five or more years.

Finding the new regime intolerable, many people tried to escape to Czechoslovakia. So severe were the Russian security measures along the new frontier that they can be compared only to the barbed-wire and minefields between two enemy armies.

Elsewhere endless incidents revealed the character of the "friendly occupation" by the Red Army. Some were comical. A friend in Vinohrady, a district of Prague, in the early days after liberation, opened the door just before midnight to a caller. It was a Red Army man who wanted to stay the night. There was no spare bed, but he insisted; so, with some misgiving, they put him on a divan. In the morning their nocturnal guest disappeared without a word. Half an hour later he was back again with a Persian rug over his shoulder. He threw it on the floor, saying, as far as they could understand him, that it was in return for hospitality. He departed. An hour or two later a woman came to the door with a policeman, who said a Russian soldier had been seen to enter the house with a rug which belonged to her. The Russian had walked into her home at the other end of the street and ordered the woman to give it to him!

Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia, had only one railway bridge over the Danube and it was destroyed during the war. The Red Army insisted on building a new one. This gesture was played high in the Communist press and on the radio. The Vitkovice

<sup>1</sup>In 1939 Paragraph 2 of the Kremlin protest to Germany against the occupation of Czechoslovakia stated: "The Soviet Government will not recognise the constitution of any country that gives the head of the State the power to renounce the independence of the State or cede its territory without the agreement of the nation."

Paragraph 6 stated: "The action taken by the German Government has provoked the forced entry of Hungarian armed forces into Ruthenia and the suppression of the national rights of its population."

Paragraph 8 stated: "In the view of the Soviet Government the actions of the German Government have not averted the danger to general peace, but on the contrary have created and increased this danger, have destroyed the political stability of Central Europe, have strengthened the causes of uncertainty already existent in Central Europe and have weakened the confidence in the safety of nations—Signed Litvinov m p."

Iron Works were commanded to deliver all the necessary material in an incredibly short time—which they managed to do by cancelling orders almost ready. They diverted the steel parts, and sent the best of their technicians and specialists to Bratislava with them. The bridge was soon erected—but the bill was not paid.

The Soviet hand was felt everywhere. Russians guarded the central deposits of the National Bank, and none of the new Czechoslovak managers was allowed to draw on the stocks of currency. It took weeks of protests before the guard was removed.

The Red Army man's love of watches became proverbial. Wrist-watches were their favourite souvenirs, but the supply obtained from the population was soon exhausted. The words "Hand over your watch" became an ironic greeting among Czechs, and many were the jokes on the subject. The Soviet equivalent of the word "watch" is "time". An old Czech folk-song begins with the question, "Where have the old gold times gone?" It is not hard to guess how much of a coincidence it was that this song was sung at a concert in Prague in the presence of several Red Army officers. They understood, or perhaps misunderstood, its meaning—and left the hall in protest.

The treatment dealt out to Czechoslovakia's restitution claims in Germany, in the Eastern zone, was in perfect conformity with the attitude of the Red Army occupying Czechoslovakia. Unless directly interested, the public knew practically nothing about it; but the matter was discussed in detail at the last session of the Foreign Committee of the Czechoslovak Parliament early in February 1948, which was attended by Mr. Jan Masaryk. The Foreign Office experts had prepared a survey for the M.P.s. It was Mr. Hajdu, a Communist, who had to admit that the Western Powers were returning to the Republic everything that had been stolen by the Germans or bought under pressure and removed during the war. On the other hand, Soviet Russia, in her sphere of activity in the Eastern Zone of Germany, permitted the return only of equipment that had been removed by force. Unfortunately for the Czechs, the Germans, to keep their war-machine running smoothly, had bought new goods with devalued marks paid into a clearing account. Therefore goods in this category could not be claimed by Czechoslovakia as long as they were found in the Eastern Zone of Germany. The number of cases of restitution in favour of Czechoslovakia from the Western and Eastern Zones respectively were in the proportion of something like ten to one. Instant indignation at this information was expressed by the members present at the meeting, which I attended on behalf of the Information Section of the Foreign Office.



Even before the initial joy of liberation had subsided large-scale problems, which had to be tackled immediately, became the responsibility of the Government and the remains of the discredited public administration the Germans had left behind.

The National Committees established in every locality, which were not more than self-appointed revolutionary bodies, had from necessity to be entrusted with wide powers of administration. It was hoped that public opinion, which had preserved most of the pre-war democratic characteristics, would make itself felt in their future activities. Parity in representation had to be fought out in many cases before it was achieved, to the disappointment of the Communist Party, which evidently had great hopes of dominating the administration by attaining disproportionate influence in the National Committees. It had planned to develop these on the lines of the "local Soviets" which were to become in turn allies of the Communist cause.

In many places only the Communists had already reached the stage of organising political groups. This was especially true in the border territories. The Communists then sponsored the establishment of "Socialist", "Catholic" or "Social Democrat" organisations, in which "reliable" elements were nominated, to prevent the genuine political parties from appearing as their competitors. Where local Committees had parity of representation for each party, the Communists were then sure of having "yes men" as their opponents.

At the same time public opinion, still acutely conscious of the immeasurable crimes committed by the German minority upon the Czech and Slovak people since Autumn 1938, demanded a quick solution of the German problem, as promised by the Government from London, and advocated by the Communist exiles in Moscow throughout the war.

The Munich Agreement, and the humiliation that followed for the whole nation under the pretext of self-determination of the Sudeten-German population, had been recognised by the Western Powers as a grave mistake. This was confirmed by the behaviour of the Sudeten Germans during the war. The transfer of population was adopted as the only means of settlement and was high on the list of Czechoslovakia's war aims. Soviet Russia, which claimed never to have been associated in any way with the Munich appeasement,<sup>1</sup> fully supported the demands of the Czechoslovak Government, agreed with the transfer in the talks with President Beneš in 1943 and 1945 in Moscow, and was among

<sup>1</sup>Action taken against the interests of Czechoslovakia on the part of Soviet Russia, such as the interruption of diplomatic relations with the Republic after the Russo-German pact (the Embassy was closed in Moscow) or the full recognition of "independent" Slovakia, were never mentioned.

the signatories of the Potsdam Agreement. Moreover Soviet Russia agreed to receive a large proportion of the transferred population in the Eastern Zone of Germany.

This assent, to enable the transfers and even to hasten them was so apparent that it aroused suspicion (which later proved to be well-founded) of their true motives. The creation of a new and comparatively strong minority on German soil, violently hating the country from which they thought they had been expelled without justification, disregarding their slogan of 1938, "Home to the Reich!" gave rise to a renewed belief among the Czechs of the need for the protection the U.S.S.R. offered against the "new danger".

It was estimated at the time of liberation that of the German minority, numbering 3,400,000, some 600,000 left Czechoslovakia of their own accord, fearing reprisal for the crimes they had committed during the war. Under the Potsdam Agreement of 20th November 1945, 1,780,000 were to be transferred to the U.S. zone and a further 780,000 to the Soviet zone of Germany. The remainder were either experts or specialists whose fate was to be decided later, or members of the recognised "democratic minority", that is, tried German Social Democrats or Communists, who were allowed to stay as long as they did not claim any minority rights, such as independent schools or newspapers. This was considered a unique and historic opportunity of settling the German problem. In the eastern part of the country, moreover, in Slovakia and Ruthenia (immediately after liberation it was not known that the fate of Ruthenia was already sealed), it was also planned to settle the question of the hostile Hungarian minority through transfer and exchange of population.

The problem of the transfer consisted not only in getting the Germans and Hungarians out of the country, but also in repopulating the border territory, which otherwise would have been largely deserted, its vast industry abandoned, and its agriculture neglected. The fact that the transfer had been almost completed by the middle of 1947 and that some two and a quarter million people from the other parts of the country were moved into the border territory without inflicting serious disorder speaks highly for the nation's organising ability.

There were naturally other very real disadvantages. The transfer area became a target for thousands of profiteers and for people who had no qualifications whatever for the innumerable posts now open to them. German property, which, if properly used, could have been distributed or sold for common benefit, and which should have formed part of the war damage compensation owed to the nation by Germany, was stolen right and left, or destroyed beyond repair.

After Munich most of the Czechs had left the border territory where they had lived with the Sudeten Germans. This proved to be a great loss, for they had been proud of their national duties as protectors of the frontiers. The nature of the transfer action after the war attracted the less desirable elements I have described, and this situation was turned to such advantage by the Communist Party that before long the borderland was a Communist stronghold. The National Committees were mainly composed of newcomers, who were quick to see the benefits of serving the party that controlled, through the Ministry of Agriculture, the distribution of the deserted land, as well as the distribution of goods and materials to business projects through the Ministry of Interior Trade. The same influence soon became evident among the applicants for the land and goods. The settlers came to be referred to in Prague and other parts of the country as "gold-diggers". The problems of those who had seen in the transfer tremendous possibilities of benefiting the nation, and had worked to that end, grew like mushrooms. The rate of crime rose steadily; law and justice were executed in most unorthodox ways; the working morale was low, and the labour situation soon became critical. The organisation known as the "National Fund", which was to exploit the riches of the borderland for the good of the nation, was a failure, and to some extent even became a source of demoralisation for the interior of the country, as a plain example of political blackmail through material advantages.

The Ministries concerned, those of Agriculture and Interior Trade, soon became powerful Communist tools. Since the party also controlled the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Information, they had little effective opposition.

The Trade Union Organisation became a foremost factor in the Communist bid for power over the working classes of Czechoslovakia. The Chairman, Antonín Zápotocký, was high in the Communist hierarchy. He was assisted by an alleged Social Democrat, Mr. Evžen Erban, who, by reason of his obedience to Zápotocký, hoped to cover his activities during the war in the German-sponsored Trade Union known as N.O.U.Z. From the end of the war Zápotocký did all in his power to build up a movement which, though seemingly voluntary, would act as the highest authority on any problems connected with employment, workers' recreation, etc., and which declared strikes to be illegal. There were no rights at all for those who stood aside. It was not surprising that Trade Union membership grew until it was over two million. The central journal of the movement, *Práce* (meaning "Work"), edited by Communists or Communist sympathisers, was merely another means of Communist propaganda.

Unceasing efforts were made to gain control of other important national organisations, such as the War-veterans Union, the Youth Movement, or the Sokol, the great national fitness organisation. At first the Communists ran their own fitness organisation (F.D.T.J.—the Federated Workers' Physical Training Union) which they later dissolved, advising the members to enter the Sokol movement. This was the means of penetrating and weakening an unpolitical but nationalist organisation, which, since it followed the spiritual ideals of early Czech and Slovak nationalist leaders, was far from leftist. A similar fate was in store for the Farmers' Union, and the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners, whose members had survived the concentration camps.

Nationalisation of the key industries was one of the foundation stones of the Košice programme. All parties agreed to it, provided that only key industries were affected and that private ownership and the competitive character of the smaller industries were preserved and guaranteed. Foreign interests were to be fairly compensated.

One of the main reasons why the non-Communist parties, especially the Catholic People's Party and the Czech Socialist Party, agreed to nationalisation was that, during the war, most of the really big undertakings, such as the Škoda Works (which became part of the Herman Göring Plant), the aviation industry, paper mills, power plants, and chemical and textile industries, had come under German control and had been reorganised to suit the needs of the German war machine. Many of the original owners had fled abroad, and if the industry was in Jewish hands, most of the proprietors had died in the gas-chambers in Poland. Generally speaking, there was not enough private capital for the vast investment necessary for the conversion of the plants to peace-time production.

Until Czechoslovakia had formally elected a National Assembly, it was the President of the Republic who, under the constitution, had the power to legalise nationalisation and issue the necessary "Presidential decree".

Promulgation of the Presidential decrees was the climax of the Independence celebrations held on 28th October 1945. Before signing, the President addressed a huge gathering of people on Wenceslaus Square. He made it clear that he was against the premature nationalisation of undertakings which were not of a size to justify the step, unless there were other sufficient reasons. He stated that he was always in favour of evolutionary development, so planned and prepared, that success was guaranteed in advance. "I have been urged to sign the decree on nationalisation and thus do the will of the working people. In so doing I feel it

my duty to warn you against any hasty decisions in these matters," said Dr. Beneš.<sup>1</sup>

Once launched, nationalisation went forward with a swing—at the insistence of the Communist Party its terms were given wider and wider meaning, embracing in turn banks and insurance businesses, the building industry, food industry, spa resorts, printing presses, hospitals, and the whole of foreign trade. The non-Communist parties retreated step by step, still determined at all costs to maintain the National Front. Theirs was a difficult position to hold, but realising how much was at stake they made concession after concession, rather than cause an open breach.

It was simple to nationalise a factory or industrial undertaking. If the number of employees was below the maximum specified for private undertakings in that particular branch, the workers' council, which could legally be established wherever more than twelve people were employed, would declare, with a little prompting, that the owner was "anti-social", meaning that he was acting against the interests of the community. Any one of a dozen reasons sufficed—that pay was not high enough, that overtime work had been unnecessarily requested, or that the workshop was insufficiently ventilated! If the owner was a member of the Communist, or in certain circumstances the Social Democratic Party, he could defend himself against his employees. Otherwise he was helpless.

On one occasion I heard a radio commentary made from the premises of a nationalised undertaking. It happened to be the huge Bata shoe factory in Zlín. The Communist commentator,

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Beneš explained later what were the four main reasons for the nationalisation of industry in Czechoslovakia.

"(1) I never doubted that revolutionary tendencies would be the overwhelming factors after any war. The Second World War has enslaved the economy of almost every small country in Europe, and industry as well as the financial system in Czechoslovakia could not be restored without considerable assistance from the State. It was therefore more just to retain it in the ownership of the State, even if the undertakings affected were to be governed later on according to the rules of private ownership.

(2) The second factor was that the Germans, who owned a large proportion of the industrial undertakings, betrayed the country and were co-responsible for crimes committed by the German nation during the war. They were transferred to Germany in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement and their property was nationalised. It should be borne in mind that for instance 90 per cent of the paper-mills and porcelain factories were in German hands at the end of the war.

"(3) The whole of Europe is adjusting its political and economic character as an influence of war. Britain has changed from a Conservative to a Labour Government. In France the leftist parties are predominant. In Europe generally there are tendencies to change from Liberalism to a system where socialism prevails. These tendencies also exist in Czechoslovakia.

(4) The last reason is a geographical one. We are neighbours of U.S.S.R. There is no doubt that the socialist system there will have a certain influence on us, even if we are and will remain a parliamentary democracy. We shall have our own regime and complete independence. But methods adopted there must also influence other countries."—*La Mitraille*, October 1947

Mr Jiří Hronek, introduced the commentary by declaring that the former capitalist management had done great harm to the financial foundation of the combine, by spending money lavishly and exploiting its 45,000 employees. The industrial reporter, who followed up these remarks, had obviously not realised what had just been said. He pointed out that the standard of living in Zlín had always been the highest in the country. He described the quick growth of the factory, its modernisation and production capacity permitting deliveries all over the world, so that the name Bata became one of the few Czech names known universally. In fact the only fitting comment he omitted was that these conditions were to the credit of the capitalist management.

A dangerous aspect of the Communist control of the nationalised industries was that they were able to find a pretext for establishing armed "factory militia". This was supposed to protect factories and plants from the vengeance of the expelled Germans. In spite of many protests from the non-Communist parties, Mr Zápotočský insisted on their organisation, and the Minister of Interior, Nosek, made arrangements for the supply of weapons which were delivered directly to every factory by the armament works in Brno and Strakonice, disregarding the fact that the local police were usually strong enough and well enough equipped to cope with the "German danger". Members of the militia were, needless to say, recruited from the ranks of staunch Communist Party supporters.

Hand in-hand with nationalisation went land reform. Here again political aims soon overshadowed economic planning and needs. As the transfer of the German population put sufficient land at the disposal of the State easily to satisfy all demands for farmland, there were soon difficulties in finding prospective farmers. The supply of labour especially fell very short of demand, since the new owners, who had formerly worked on the land, were more interested in being employers than employees. They were not prepared to do the heaviest work themselves. Of a total area of 12,000,000 hectares, nearly 5,000,000 were redistributed to small farmers, and, in the border territories, to the host of applicants who streamed in from all parts of the country. This was a revolution in the system of land ownership and in the whole agricultural economy. The permanent results were not to be seen until much later, but it soon became evident that Czechoslovakia's dependency on Soviet deliveries was steadily increasing. Experts estimated that in the future some 125,000 truckloads of grain would have to be imported yearly from U.S.S.R.

In the difficult period immediately after the war U.N.R.R.A.

<sup>1</sup>Now renamed as Gottwaldov to honour Mr Gottwald

deliveries alone saved Czechoslovakia's economy from disaster. The entire population knew what a boon U.N.R.R.A. was. The Communist Party and its Governmental representatives did not hesitate to level accusations of economic imperialism at the Western nations sponsoring it.

Rumours went out that payment for the relief deliveries was being extracted to the last penny—giving the impression that the nation was paying U.N.R.R.A. Actually, of course, the only payments made were by the public to the Ministry of Finance, which in accordance with international agreement used the funds so provided—amounting to some £80,000,000—for financing the repair of war-damage and for social purposes.

The Communist campaign against U.N.R.R.A.—strangely enough its deliveries were supervised in Czechoslovakia by Mr. Alexejev, a Soviet official of the world organisation—went so far that Jan Masaryk felt called upon to declare he was ashamed that one of the greatest examples of the solidarity of the war-winning powers with the war-damaged countries could be made the subject of a small-minded political campaign. In this way he expressed what most of the people felt when they referred to the agency as "Auntie U.N.R.R.A.". Provincial towns renamed streets as "U.N.R.R.A." streets and at least one U.N.R.R.A. monument was erected.

The provisional National Assembly was meanwhile far from being a representative body reflecting the political desires of the people. It had been agreed that each party—four in the Czech countries and two in Slovakia<sup>1</sup>—should nominate an equal number of deputies, and some seats were reserved for national movements, such as economic, cultural, youth, and other organisations, making a total of 300 deputies or M.P.s.

This body, not yet constitutional, met for the first time on 28th October 1945. As already explained, its main task was to prepare the election of an Assembly which would then give the country its new constitution, "preserving", as it was put, "all the gains of the May revolution and of the Košice Government programme, such as nationalisation and social and land reforms".

Making full use of the key positions they had held since the Košice Government was established, the Communist Party strove hard to win more favour among the population or to exert

<sup>1</sup>The pre-war number of parties in Czechoslovakia, running up to twenty-four in the communal elections and fourteen in parliamentary and senate elections was of course a luxury for a comparatively small country. In 1939, during his professorship at the Chicago University, Dr. Beneš said that if the bad consequences of too many parties were to be restricted in the post-war democracy, the first step should be the limitation of the number of political parties. After the war the Fascist and several right-wing parties, including the Agrarian Party, being the strongest Czech pre-war party, were banned, as agreed in Moscow and proclaimed in Košice.

pressure on public opinion. Broadcasting played the main part in this campaign. The radio was not only controlled by the Communist-directed Ministry of Information, but it had an almost entirely Communist management, headed by Mr. Laštovička, the General Manager, Mr. Očadlík, the Programme Manager, and Mr. Hroněk, the Chief of the News Service, all three members of the Communist Party. They were efficiently supported by assistants of the same political conviction who remained in the background, Mme Outratová, the unofficial censor, and Mme Gregorová, the Secretary of the management. Under these conditions it was not difficult to guess their line in the months leading up to the 1946 elections. The administrative and technical managers, it is true, were not Communists, but they were not concerned with matters of policy.

For some time the regular Sunday morning broadcast was a tirade from the artistic and surrealist theatre manager, E. F. Burian, whose violent attacks on anything and everything not in favour with the Communist Party became so notorious that the listening public eventually threatened to give up their licences. They succeeded in silencing him only to hear, in exchange, the not less threatening discourses of Dr. Zdeněk Nejedlý, the Minister of Education, who had won fame by using both the Czechoslovak and Soviet flags on his car, and by ordering all the notices and signs in his Ministry to be written in two languages—Czech and Russian.

During the week the officially favoured broadcast was the Trade Union transmission, when its leader, Mr. Zápotocký, played the first violin.

The situation in the broadcasting organisation was typical of the atmosphere that preceded the May 1946 elections. The campaign conducted by the candidates as individuals was, however, remarkably restrained in the circumstances. Party manoeuvres were kept within reasonable limits. There were no speeches against the governmental programme, or attacks on the alliance with Soviet Russia, and to honour the President's wish that his impartial attitude should be maintained his name was hardly ever mentioned.

The main theme of Communist propaganda was that the Party was the sole guarantor of friendship with the Soviet Union, and in turn that the Soviet Union was the power really responsible for Czechoslovakia's liberation. In the background was the suggestion that whoever voted against the Communists was renouncing friendship with the U.S.S.R. and endangering the nation's economic, social and cultural progress. In 1946 it was still the secret hope of the Communist Party that it would gain a majority which would enable it to renounce co-operation with other parties.



it was gained. For the moment their first move was to reaffirm their claim to the important governmental positions they had held in the provisional National Assembly, and which were out of proportion to their numerical strength.

Although the Communist Party continued loudly to acclaim Soviet friendship, no one could explain, for instance, why no visas were issued to Czechoslovak citizens for the Eastern Zone of Germany, for any reason, business or private. Road transports going to Warnemünde and on to Denmark or Sweden were not allowed to cross Soviet controlled territory, and much time and petrol were wasted in making detours through the U.S. zone, for which visas were easily obtained.

I once spoke to a delegation of Czechoslovak students who had come to the Foreign Ministry to ask for our intervention. They had been told that the only way for them to go to Denmark was via Poland. It meant such an increase in time and travelling expenses that they were considering abandoning the journey, which had been planned for some eighty students. The Foreign Office could do nothing about it.

It was significant that while Czechoslovakia had diplomatic or consular representation in almost every big town in Western Germany such as Munich, Baden Baden, Frankfurt, Hamburg and elsewhere, the only mission permitted in the Eastern Zone was the military and diplomatic mission to the Control Commission in Berlin. It was clear that Czechoslovakia had not gained the full confidence of the Soviet military or civil authorities.

The policy followed by Czechoslovakia in her international activities was closely observed by her powerful neighbour. President Beneš, being well aware of the Soviet attitude, notified Marshal Stalin in advance when in 1947 Czechoslovakia was making preparations for the renewal of her pre-war military alliance with France, a country that, like Czechoslovakia, had suffered severely from her proximity to Germany. The President's letter was not received with enthusiasm. Soon afterwards, on 5th July, while political negotiations between Poland and Czechoslovakia were taking place in Prague, the invitation to attend the Paris talks on the European Recovery Programme was extended to all war devastated European countries at the suggestion of the United States Foreign Secretary, General Marshall.

When Mr. Masaryk asked his views the Polish Prime Minister, Cyrankiewicz, who was in Prague for the Polish talks, replied that Poland was most interested in the Marshall proposals and would also send representatives to Paris. This statement was passed to the Czechoslovak Government which met on 7th July. After discussion it was voted unanimously that Czechoslovakia would accept the invitation. Poland did not act as quickly and

forty-eight hours later it was evident that Czechoslovakia was the only country behind the "Iron Curtain" that had agreed to take part in the conference in Paris. The same day a Czechoslovak governmental delegation, headed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, left for Moscow to discuss pending political problems and to pave the way for a new commercial treaty with Soviet Russia. Dr. Drtina, the Minister of Justice, accompanied them in place of Dr. Ripka, the Minister of Foreign Trade, who had suddenly been taken ill.

It was only after the return of the delegation to Prague that details of the visit became known in certain quarters of the Foreign Ministry. The audience with Marshal Stalin had been arranged for nine-thirty the morning after their arrival. Masaryk and Drtina met half an hour earlier in one of the rooms of the State residence put at their disposal, but Mr. Gottwald was late in appearing. They became impatient as the minutes passed, and eventually Mr. Masaryk sent a message of enquiry to Mr. Gottwald's apartments. The Prime Minister's secretary came down, and with profuse apologies explained that the reception had been postponed, but he had omitted to inform them. At that minute the Prime Minister entered, evidently in the best of spirits.

"All has gone well," he announced to Mr. Masaryk, who still had no idea what the Prime Minister was talking about or what had given him such satisfaction. "We shall not need to go to Paris, we shall get all we want from the Soviet Union. The Generalissimo has just told me so!"

When Mr. Masaryk had recovered from his surprise and annoyance he turned to Dr. Drtina, ignoring Gottwald, and said:

"It seems there is not much point in our being here at all. I may as well hand in my resignation!"

The smile faded away from Mr. Gottwald's face. He urged Mr. Masaryk not to take any hasty decisions.

"In any case the Generalissimo is expecting us almost immediately. You will be able to hear his proposals yourself."

In the Kremlin their reception was cold. Marshal Stalin had the newspapers of the world displayed on his table and pointed out two-inch headlines: "Prague losing her ties with Moscow", "Breach in the Eastern Bloc", and others, just as the more sensational overseas newspapers had happened to report Czechoslovakia's decision to go to Paris.

"In these circumstances, gentlemen," said the Marshal, after long discussion on Czechoslovakia's economic situation, "it is for you to decide whether you consider the pact of friendship and mutual aid between our countries valid, or whether you

prefer to go to Paris. I suggest that you discuss it with your Government and let me have your answer later to-day."

Mr. Gottwald communicated with Prague immediately and called an extra-ordinary session of the Cabinet, which was requested to give its views on the matter in the shortest possible time, as the Marshal was waiting for an answer.

I wonder what were Mr. Masaryk's feelings. Perhaps he had in mind what he had once said during a meeting of the Parliamentary Foreign Committee, when he was pleading for closer economic co-operation with the Western countries—that he would not mind going with his hand outstretched to beg for contributions towards a higher standard of living in Czechoslovakia. He added: "We must be very careful not to cut the thread of economic relations with the West, which is growing thinner and thinner. That would lower the standard of living for our good people."

In Prague one of the most dramatic sessions of the Government, since Hácha went to Berlin, was taking place. The non-Communist members of the Government were bitterly opposed to withdrawing the decision on which they had agreed unanimously forty-eight hours before. How could it be explained to the world and to the Czech people? the Ministers asked. Several telephone calls were exchanged with Moscow. Mr. Masaryk was called to the telephone to repeat Stalin's words. Too much was at stake—the country's future well-being, the Government's independence, Soviet friendship, and the alliance—in brief, the existence of the whole nation. Late in the afternoon the reluctant decision was made:

"Czechoslovakia has accepted Generalissimo Stalin's friendly gesture, by which he offers to conclude with Czechoslovakia a commercial treaty which would secure all the deliveries necessary to ensure her supplies of necessities and to maintain her industrial production."

Officially Czechoslovakia could not accept assistance which had been rejected by her Slav allies and neighbours.<sup>1</sup> The real reason was deeper—the help extended by means of the Marshall plan would not only have brought great popularity to the United States, at the expense of the Communist Party, but it might have increased the standard of living in Czechoslovakia, already incomparably higher than in the Soviet Union, to approach that of the Western democracies, which of course could not have been tolerated in Moscow.

<sup>1</sup>In the Governmental declaration issued as explanation of the sudden change of attitude on 10th July, it was said "Czechoslovak participation would be explained as a deed aimed against friendship with the Soviet Union and other Slav allies"—which were the actual words Generalissimo Stalin used when expressing his surprise about the original decision of the Government.

The commercial treaty negotiated with Soviet Russia strengthened the economic ties between the two countries. The Czechoslovak industrial potential before the war had been almost entirely planned to meet the demands of Western and overseas buyers, and the role Soviet Russia played in external trade relations was negligible. After the war the latter improved slightly, but never exceeded 10 per cent of the total turnover. The new treaty increased the proportion to some 16 per cent and it was expected that within a year or two deliveries to U.S.S.R. could reach as much as 24 to 30 per cent of total exports, still leaving a margin of some 70 per cent to be placed on other markets.

To reach that percentage meant reorganising part of the Czechoslovak industrial scheme. Soviet Russia was mainly interested in the heavy industrial products, such as cranes, railway engines, and other rolling stock. Some 200,000 tons of metal pipelines were also to be delivered, and steel products in such quantities that the allocation of steel for the home building programme had to be cut down to 12 per cent of the estimated requirement.

In other words, Czechoslovakia had to scrap the industrial plans formulated after the war and become a tool of the Soviet industrial mobilisation plan. All criticism, or even discussion, of prices or other questions concerning the trade agreement was considered by the Communist Party as an attack on the Alliance with the Soviet Union. On the other hand its advantages were boasted in such terms that the impression was given that the agreement had been signed between the Communists of Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. and not between two independent countries.

The treaty which was signed in Moscow on 11th December 1947 was to regulate the exchange of goods for the period from 1948 until 1952, and it was expected that a yearly turnover amounting to £50,000,000 sterling would be reached. U.S.S.R. was to deliver grain, cotton, fertilisers, mangan, chromium and other ores as well as certain other raw materials in exchange for the oil pipelines, industrial equipment for power plants, engines and vehicles, textiles, shoes, glass, chemicals, and other products all sought after on the world markets and for most of which the raw materials, such as leather or wool, had to be bought in hard currencies.

The Minister of Foreign Trade, Dr. Ripka, after his return from the final negotiations with Mr. Mikojan, the Soviet Minister of Trade, found it necessary to explain publicly:

"The circumstances surrounding the agreement achieved in Moscow could be better explained and understood if the whole

transaction were measured against our economic needs and not against possible advantages in party politics." He stressed the fact that "In Soviet Russia they know there are other people as well as Communists in Czechoslovakia. It is therefore a faulty policy on the part of the Communist Party to try and create the impression that the friends of Russia are in their ranks only. I have to reject certain statements made publicly to the effect that whoever is not a Communist is a traitor. We cannot be frightened into giving up democracy, and we will not tolerate further changes in our economic structure, because it would lead only to a totalitarian regime." Then Dr. Ripka added: "The fight for a Republic in the true spirit of Masaryk is not yet definitely won."

It was apparent of course that, as in diplomatic spheres, Soviet interests were also far-reaching in industrial fields. In cases where deliveries of Soviet armaments would have created too much suspicion, Czechoslovak deliveries were easier to negotiate. A series of Messerschmitts were produced in the Prague Letov works—and secretly despatched to Palestine. Jewish pilots were trained in Budějovice in Southern Bohemia. At the same time a trade delegation was sent to Cairo and negotiated the supply to Egypt of Škoda armaments and munitions to the value of nearly £1,000,000 sterling—and in this way both sides had enough material to continue their quarrel.

In spite of statements to the contrary, to meet the Russian demands the main structure of Czechoslovak economy had to be altered, and within the five-year plan, following up the two-year plan, nearly one million workers will have to change their occupation. The Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, made this quite clear when he declared at an extraordinary meeting of the Central Planning Commission:

"It is necessary to ensure a stable and constant development of our economy. We shall achieve this by making the development of our enlarged and changed economy independent, as far as possible, of the fluctuations of capitalist economics, and by fully partaking in the stable and unceasing growth of the Soviet planned economy as well as the planned economy of other people's democracies."

He omitted to say that these changes were not planned to suit Czechoslovak needs, but to permit rearmament by Yugoslavia and other countries behind the Iron Curtain, and to make Czechoslovakia an outpost of the Soviet war-industry, which can already claim a unique record, since it represents a higher percentage of national output than any country in the world.

The drought which swept Europe in the summer of 1947 lost in Czechoslovakia grain to the value of nearly £80,000,000, or,

measured in other terms, the entire financial proceeds of U.N.R.R.A. help, or the value of three and a half years of planned industrial deliveries to Soviet Russia.

Marshal Stalin, in response to a request made by Prime Minister Gottwald towards the end of the year, agreed to increase the Soviet deliveries by 600,000 tons of grain, for both human consumption and cattle fodder. This supply, repaid in Czechoslovak industrial products, which could at any time have been placed on the world markets for dollars or other hard currencies, and would in turn have bought grain or other products, was seized upon as an excellent opportunity for Communist and Soviet propaganda. People became really weary of hearing about that grain. First it was advertised everywhere that 40 per cent of the bread on sale was made from Soviet grain. In reply the "reactionary" press pointed out that Soviet Russia had not yet delivered one single sack of grain for flour-milling for bread. Then slogans appeared in tram-cars, in shop-windows, and on transport trucks, such as:

*"A friend in need is a friend indeed,  
But not everyone gives you a sack of flour."*

The cinema news-reels and broadcasts were full of reports on the Soviet grain deliveries, and newspapers were obliged to send members of their staff to watch the reloading of the grain on the Soviet-Czechoslovak border, where it had to be shifted from the wide-gauge trucks to the normal Continental trucks used in the country. A special goods station was erected for the handling of the sudden deliveries of large quantities of grain. The Communist press published whole pages about it.

At the same time the Government had to find means of compensating farmers for the great losses caused by the drought. The first Communist suggestion was for a special tax to be levied on "millionaires" (not in pounds, of course, but in Czechoslovak crowns). It was a well-calculated pre-election move. If adopted, this proposal would have meant that the greater part of the harvest losses should have been made good by people whose property exceeded £5,000. Closer examination showed that such a levy—which could not by any means have been legally considered as within the terms of the Constitution, and would have finally destroyed all rights of private ownership—could only bring an insignificant part of the amount needed. The proposal was therefore opposed by the non-Marxist parties, and the Communists were defeated in the Government vote. The next day the Communist press reported the names of the members of the Government who had voted against the levy,

which was not the usual practice after a closed session, and opened a vindictive campaign against them.

Mr. Masaryk had been ill and had not attended the meeting. Realising how much was at stake, he wrote a letter to *Svobodné Noviny*<sup>1</sup> in which he said how sorry he was to have missed it, declaring that had he been there he would have cast his vote against the taxation of "millionaires" from purely selfish reasons, as he felt he was one of them. He added:

"I got quite a decent sum for my booklet *London Calling*, and as I usually spend all my money straight away I shouldn't be able to pay anyway."

Since the days when he had made his wartime broadcasts from the B.B.C. Jan Masaryk's name had been almost sacred. His latest step brought him new admirers and followers. Everyone understood it was not so much a question of defending the "millionaires" but of maintaining the law and opposing provocative propaganda.

The Communists were plainly defeated and they took it badly. They could not support the isolated position they had made for themselves, and a governmental crisis was therefore bound to come.<sup>2</sup>

The real Communist aim became a matter for conjecture. Just at that time the international situation seemed to indicate that the Communists would not get away with a putsch attempt, which would obviously be interpreted in international politics as a move dictated or sanctioned by the Kremlin.

"And what has the Soviet to gain by such a step?" people asked each other. Whenever these problems were touched upon there was speculation as to the outcome of the mounting tension.

<sup>1</sup>The pre-war  *Lidové Noviny*

<sup>2</sup>I read at that time in the *Christian Science Monitor* an article by J. C. Harsche in which he said: "Czechoslovak statesmanship now depends on rope acrobacy. Should the rope give way on the Russian side the country would be swallowed up within twenty-four hours by Communists supported by the U.S.S.R. Should it give way on the Western side the high standard of living would be gone. The final result would be the same as in the first case."

## CHAPTER FOUR

# Bombs Disguised as Perfume

*'With these evil deeds            you are writing a white book  
of bloody horror, an indictment with which you pronounce  
your own verdict 'Guilty' "*

JAN MASARYK to the oppressors of the Czechs during  
the war in a broadcast from the B B C

THE EXCITEMENT over the Cabinet discord on the "millionaire" taxation had not faded before a new shock increased the strain. On 11th September 1947, the newsboys in Prague, shouting the headlines, were overwhelmed by people who grabbed the papers out of their hands.

'Life attempt on Jan Masaryk, Zenkl and Drtina', "Bombs disguised as perfume delivered to Ministers", "Masaryk unhurt after bomb plot", the stupefied people read. As they read in Prague, the news was in all the chancelleries of Europe. It gave cause for serious consideration. What was to be achieved by killing the son of the President Liberator, Czechoslovakia's beloved Honza Masaryk?<sup>1</sup> Why Masaryk, the non party man? Why Zenkl, the Vice Prime Minister who survived the German concentration camps, and why Drtina, the Minister of Justice—known also as 'Pavel Svaty', under which name he broadcast regularly over the B B C during the war—enjoying popularity only second to that of Masaryk and Beneš? Masaryk, Zenkl and Drtina were three men who had sworn allegiance to Beneš and democracy. It seemed incredible that anyone would dare to threaten such patriots.

People began to assemble on the street corners, especially in front of the editorial offices of the big daily papers of *Svobodné Slovo* (Free Word), the Czech Socialist organ, and *Rude Pravo* (Red Right), the Communist Party mouthpiece. There were plenty of reasons suggested for the attempt on the lives of these three Ministers who were known as the foremost fighters against the bolshevisation of Czechoslovakia. They were men whose position was almost invincible. Zenkl was too well known for his honesty to be discredited by the usual political abuse, and was also well entrenched in his position as leader of the Czech Socialist

<sup>1</sup>Honza is the nickname for Jan



Party. Masaryk, whose genuine love for his people placed him in their hearts, was, as someone remarked, the only man besides Drtina who could tell the whole story of Czechoslovakia's withdrawal from the Marshall Plan. Another man, who took this comment as an affront to the Soviet, silenced him immediately. A woman spoke up and said she was of the same opinion. Anyone who was afraid of free speech need not stay and listen to it. "They were picked because they stood in the way of this so-called progress, especially Drtina," she added. "He's a man who believes in treating all alike, even the ones who wear a red tie and belong to the 'right' party!"

The investigation subsequently carried out by the police disclosed that on 9th September an unknown man had posted three parcels addressed to the respective Ministers. The contents were described as perfume. The next morning two of the parcels were delivered, one to the office of the Minister of Justice, and the second to the Vice-Prime Minister. In each case suspicion was aroused. The secretary to the Vice-Prime Minister notified the police immediately and, by prompt action, the third parcel was detected while still in the post, before it was despatched to the Czernin Palais, to the office of Mr. Masaryk. The parcel delivered to the Ministry of Justice was by chance handled by an ex-officer, who unpacked it very carefully. Realising immediately what the contents might be, he carried it into the open where the box was opened without detonating the fuse. Then the police were called to take it over.

Special safety precautions were taken immediately. The Ministers were guarded and a search was instigated.

Twenty-four hours after the attempt was made the Secretary-General of the Communist Party, Mr. Rudolf Slánský, without waiting for the results of the police findings, declared that the whole affair was obviously amateur—merely provocation of reactionary origin. He pointed out that it was naïve to suppose that a Minister would open his own post, but overlooked the possibility that a gift parcel might be expected to be unwrapped in the recipient's presence.

The police followed several trails; many people were questioned, and some arrested, only to be set free again. A number of discoveries were made of persons in unlawful possession of weapons and similar offences, but for a few weeks there was little concrete result of the police investigation. The matter might have rested there were it not for an incident reported in *Svobodné Slovo*. Dr. Vladimír Krajina, the Secretary General of the Czech Socialist Party, was said to have discovered a clue which might have a very important bearing on the course of the enquiries.

It transpired that Dr. Krajina had his attention drawn to certain remarks made in public in a small town in the region of Olomouc in Moravia, which was his own constituency. He made some preliminary investigations in person and then handed the matter over to the Ministry of Justice, which decided there was evidence enough to justify submitting the findings to a court of law. In this way the legal responsibility for further investigation passed from the hands of the police and the Ministry of the Interior into the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, governed by Dr. Drtina, to whom one of the parcels had been addressed. Dr. Marianko and Dr. Doležal were the officials dealing with the case.

Just about that time an innovation was introduced in the Czechoslovak Parliament. This was the provision of a regular question-time, when Ministers appeared to answer in person to the questions put forward by deputies. It at once became evident that the investigation of the attempt and questions connected with it would be in the limelight of interest and would receive considerable attention in this session.

Within a short time it was disclosed in the press that in the village of Krčman, near Olomouc, a cabinet-maker called Jan Kopka, his wife Božena, and four other people had been re-arrested, having been formerly held by the police for questioning and then released. Kopka had boasted in the local public house that if he chose he could tell where perfume-boxes for Ministers were made. He was supported by the chairman of the local National Committee, an engine-driver called Josef Štěpánek, who clapped him on the shoulder and said: "Of course we could if we wanted to—we usually do a thorough job between us!"

This was the incident reported to Dr. Krajina, which led not only to the arrests but also to a charge of attempted murder and violation of paragraph 7 of the law for the protection of the Republic.

The Ministry of the Interior promptly issued an official statement to the effect that Dr. Krajina's actions had hampered the Ministry's investigation, since the persons now re-arrested had been released with a view to furthering the next stage of the enquiries.

When questioned in Parliament by Mr. Ota Hora, a Socialist M.P., the Minister of the Interior, Mr. Vaclav Nosek, repeated the criticism of Dr. Krajina. He stated that the police had done everything possible to bring the investigation to a successful conclusion, making searches of approximately one hundred private premises, questioning seven hundred and sixty persons, and arresting twenty-nine. Sixteen cases of unlawful possession

of weapons or explosives had been discovered. He was furthermore convinced that certain boxes found in Krčman, which were similar to those used for the attempt, had no connection with those actually used.

This statement was immediately challenged by the Minister of Justice, Dr. Drtina. He regretted having to suggest that the Minister of the Interior had been misinformed. The arrests had been undertaken at the express command of Dr. Drtina himself because criminal deeds had been discovered and admitted. He wished to thank Dr. Krajina, the police, and the law-court personnel for the good services rendered to the cause of justice.

In the meantime the District National Committee had no alternative but to notify the local Committee in Krčman that Mr. Štěpánek must be suspended. A porter employed in the Olomouc Secretariat of the Communist Party, who was related to Štěpánek, was also detained when it was found that his wife had in person ordered the manufacture of the three boxes by Kopka for a specified purpose. The next suspect to be arrested was a pyrotechnician in Olomouc, who gave details of the composition of the bombs. The Ministry of Justice continued with its enquiries, and the findings were given to me by Dr. Krajina, who kept in close touch with the judicial investigators. They were as follows:

"(a) The boxes containing explosives were made by a Communist carpenter, Jan Kopka, in Krčman, who admitted his guilt

"(b) The Communist headquarters in Olomouc ordered the manufacture of the boxes.

"(c) The explosives were placed in the boxes by a Communist Member of Parliament, Jaroslav Jura-Sosnar.

"(d) Three Communist secret stores of heavy machine-guns, automatic and ordinary rifles, and hand grenades were found in the course of the investigation. It was proved conclusively that the attempt had been prepared with the full knowledge of the Communist Politburo in Prague."

In November Mr. Jaroslav Jura-Sosnar, the Communist M.P., was deprived of his parliamentary immunity, resigned his seat and was arrested. There seemed unquestionable proof of his guilt. A public trial was to be held in March 1948. The police in the meantime made a declaration, afterwards found to be false, that Jura-Sosnar had called on the police of his own accord. It also came to light that he had been assisted by the police, on the instructions of the Ministry of Interior, in covering some of the traces of the crime. There was little doubt left that Kopka and his wife had been released after their preliminary questioning with the same intention. Apart from the arrests, however, the details

of the evidence had not been published. When the investigations were still at an early stage Dr. Cepička, the Chairman of the Communist Party in Olomouc, had entered the Government as Minister of Home Trade. The evidence against him continued to be assembled with the eventual object of exposing his part in the attempt in open court. It would not in any case have been a propitious moment to precipitate a political crisis by indicting a Minister.

The public had become alarmed at the sudden change in the course of the investigation. It was generally realised that something was going on behind the scenes.

At this point attention was suddenly drawn from the criminal to the political front by the intensification in Slovakia of the campaign waged by the Communist Party, holding 30 per cent of the vote, against the Slovak Democratic Party who had gained over 60 per cent. The bomb-plot was temporarily forgotten.

It has been described how the Communist Party had gained control of the Trade Unions and of other important and allegedly non-political organisations.

It was suggested by the Slovak Communist Party that the National Front, now consisting only of representatives of political parties, should be enlarged by admitting representatives of these bodies. This move was planned, in Slovakia, to bring about a certain balance of power by bolstering up the Communist minority. The Democratic Party, however, succeeded in defeating the motion. In turn similar attempts were made in Bohemia and Moravia, where, if the inclusion of representatives of the Trade Unions and other Communist controlled bodies into the National Front had been achieved, it would have given the Communist Party a clear majority. This was also averted. The press was promptly flooded with reports of large-scale espionage, involving members of the Czech Socialist Party, the second largest in Bohemia and Moravia. These were found, of course, to have no foundation in fact.

The system of threat and inducement developed by branches of the Communist Party in the factory councils became insupportable, and the Social Democratic Minister of Industry, Mr. Laušman, offered his resignation in protest, since he realised that the working time lost in disputes, achieving the same effect as countless small strikes, was seriously endangering industrial output. His resignation was not accepted by Dr. Beneš, but it resulted in slowing down the campaign for the time being.

Soon afterwards Mr. Laušman's colleague in the Social Democratic Party, Vaclav Majer, known as the strong man of the party's right wing, left Prague for Geneva to attend the United Nations Food Conference. After his departure something

unforeseen happened. *Rude Pravo* ("Red Right"), the central organ of the Communist Party, and *Pravo Lidu* ("People's Right"), the organ of the Social Democratic Party, announced that an agreement had been reached on future political co-operation between the Communist and Social Democrat Parties which would defend them against all possible attacks from the reactionary elements. This step Mr. Fierlinger took of his own accord, as Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, after secret meetings and negotiations with the Communist leaders. It immediately aroused great indignation among the majority of the members of the Social Democratic Party. It will be remembered that Mr. Fierlinger had been appointed Premier after the war largely at Communist instigation. His present position as Chairman of his party had never attracted the criticism and abuse levelled at every other non-Communist Minister or political leader, including Mr. Laušman and Mr. Majer, the other Social Democrat Ministers. This protection was now well repaid.

The commentaries in the Social Democratic and Communist press assured the public that the agreement concluded between the two Marxist parties was by no means a step towards a merger. Some people wondered whether it was not meant as a means of penetrating the Communist organisation in order to influence their future moves, which, it was already feared, might endanger the very existence of Czechoslovakia's democracy. This interpretation was naturally supported by the left-wing members of the Social Democratic Party and attempts were made to portray Mr. Fierlinger as a genius in political appeasement. The majority of the members, led by the popular Minister of Food, Vaclav Majer, a war-veteran and sincere follower of President Beneš, most strongly objected to the whole affair. Mr. Majer also expressed his personal opinion of the sudden manoeuvre by offering his resignation to the President. Hundreds of telegrams were received by the Party Secretary, Mr. Blažej Vilim, expressing full confidence in Mr. Majer by party members and urging him to withdraw his resignation. The General Congress of the Party, called for November in Brno, was considered an excellent occasion to clarify the situation in the Social Democratic Party. Meanwhile matters were left as they stood.

The political and economic scene was changing from day to day. The cold war, waged not only on the nerves of the public but also against all politicians opposing the Communist policy, went on with an apparently inexhaustible supply of new and unexpected weapons. Considering the limitations imposed by Czechoslovakia's general situation, the Opposition made a disciplined and bold stand against a strong, ruthless opponent who enjoyed almost unlimited power and funds.

The budget of the Ministry of Information was nearly as big as that of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reaching some £2,000,000 sterling yearly. The propaganda for the two-year plan alone cost the taxpayer nearly £250,000. The Ministry's funds were used for an extraordinary variety of purposes, from the financing of visits to Czechoslovakia of foreign Communist delegations, to awarding prizes and flags on the Soviet pattern for record work in the factories and mines. It also trespassed on the field of activities rightly the concern of other non-Communist Ministries, and to a considerable extent. It was, for instance, clearly understood, when the Ministry of Information was set up after the war, that its functions would be limited to Czechoslovak territory only. This had not been respected for a long time. An information office established in Paris for the Peace Conference period was never closed down, and in fact is publishing a weekly called *Parallèle 50* which is now serving the interest of all Communist countries. It is directly financed by the Ministry of Information. A similar office was established in Stockholm, and the step was sanctioned by the Government even before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was able to submit comments. Thus in both these countries the personnel of the Ministry of Information were competing in their activities with the Press Attachés, neither of whom, incidentally, was a Communist. In London, Washington and other capitals, Ministry of Information officials were installed with the office of Cultural Attaché. This again occurred mainly where the Press Attaché was not for the time being of Communist belief, or where there were certain special duties of political and other character which could not be undertaken by the Press Attaché.

The Communist Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Duriš, had similar ambitions to extend his sphere of activities. In some countries the office of Agricultural Attaché was introduced to enable his representatives to share in the field of agriculture on an international scale. On the home front, he had it announced, for instance, with great publicity in all the Communist press, including the organs of the organisations described as non-political, a great campaign for the improvement of health conditions in the country districts. This of course was the direct concern of the Ministry of Health. Nevertheless the Ministry of Agriculture, still having certain funds at its disposal within the frame of the 1947 budget, bought and distributed, as part of the campaign, forty ambulances, which were presented with great celebration as Ministry of Agriculture gifts. The ceremonies were accompanied by a series of speeches advocating an extremely leftist Agrarian policy.

The eyes of the public were now fixed on the November

Congress of the Social Democratic Party, which dealt with Fierlinger's betrayal by sweeping him away from the Party Chairmanship and electing Laušman, a man still acceptable to most of the Party. This was also a setback for the Kremlin. Fierlinger's role and character were best depicted in a saying long associated with his relationship to the Social Democratic Party, that "Moscow trusts Gottwald as long as Fierlinger follows in his footsteps". Fierlinger had suddenly become a general without an army, and his reputation had become doubtful. Voices in Moscow echoed that the Brno affair might lead to a serious political crisis. Fierlinger himself was heard to say before stepping down from the Brno platform: "In four months you will have to elect a new chairman!" Was it just the wishful thinking of a defeated leader or did he know more than those who brought about his downfall?

All over the country the shortage of supplies, particularly textiles, had been causing much indignation. There was nothing to be bought even for people who had special coupons or permits for purchases. One morning the press was full of sensational stories announcing the discovery of hundreds of thousands of yards of best woollen material hidden carefully away in the stockrooms of Prague's largest textile stores. The explanation given by owners and managers was that the Ministry of Internal Trade had ordered the sale of textiles to be held up until new prices and distribution orders had been issued, which had not yet been done. It was also pointed out that exact records of the stocks were listed with the Ministry and had been examined by its experts. Their protests were in vain. Prokop and Čáp Ltd., Barhoň Ltd., and dozens of other old-established firms of good repute had to close their doors at once. The managements were charged with withholding goods from the public, hoarding capital invested in the material against the public interest, and sabotaging the distribution system. Administrators appointed by the Ministry, called "national trustees", took complete control of the firms. The textile scandal was not allowed to stop there. It engulfed the wholesale firms, too, and in an incredibly short time all the wholesale textile trade had been liquidated, its function being transferred to new regional distribution centres set up by the Ministry of Interior Trade. At this point the Minister, Mr. Zamřial, who was said to be in poor health, resigned to make way for a man still little known to the public, the provincial lawyer from Olomouc, Dr. Alexej Čepička. Back in May 1945 he had achieved local fame when, as head of the Olomouc National Committee, he suspended the powers of the local courts and declared all religious marriages invalid. The Government soon annulled both orders. From then on he remained in

obscurity until Olomouc received publicity as the scene of preparation for the bomb-plot.

As the winter months passed the food situation rapidly deteriorated. There was a severe shortage of dairy products, very small quantities of butter and milk being available for young children only, while the meat ration grew steadily smaller; vegetables were hardly to be seen, and tea, coffee and cocoa were almost non-existent. Even the bread ration was cut. The summer drought was still blamed, to some extent justly, but it was also used to explain the absence of improvement in the standard of living, which towards the end of the first half of the two-year plan was supposed to have reached pre-war level. The disappearance of U.N.R.R.A. supplies made itself felt in every direction and could not possibly be made good by the Soviet grain deliveries. Moreover, it was generally known that the period of drought had damaged crops all over Europe; but, in spite of this, news brought in from other countries by foreign visitors, or reported in the foreign press and broadcasts, spoke of an improved economic situation in almost every country in Western Europe, including Italy. Even the rations in Germany were comparable to what was offered to the people of Czechoslovakia. These were facts which could not be ignored, even when the hysterical propaganda machine was working overtime.

At the beginning of December 1947 I was still optimistic enough to be surprised when I heard from Colonel Milsche, the author of *Blitzkrieg*, *Paratroops*, *Is bombing decisive?*, *Hitler's Blunder*, and other books on military strategy, all best-sellers, whom I had known for a good many years, that he had decided to leave Czechoslovakia. Knowing him not only as a brilliant strategist, but as a man of reason and sagacity not given to impulsive decisions, this was a hint of the future the country was facing. I realised he must have good reason to prompt him to take such a step, which not only meant giving up his military career and leaving the country, but forgoing the advantages due to him for his services during the war. I argued with him about it for quite a time. The picture he drew of future political development in Czechoslovakia seemed exaggerated even then.

"There will be a complete debacle," he said. "The Communist Party is bound to accept a large share of the responsibility for the present economic situation, and because they cannot tolerate any criticism they must provoke a revolution. I believe that the country's independence is at stake." I saw he meant it in all seriousness.

"You are too pessimistic," I told him. "In any case they won't do anything before the Sokol Rally. And what about the six hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Charles



University next spring? Thousands and thousands of foreign visitors are expected. They can't risk spoiling events so popular with the whole nation. In between there will be elections on the good 'old pattern." I tried to crack a joke, rather feebly, about his deserting us.

Colonel Miksche was not smiling. He said earnestly: "Don't ask me to take too much responsibility on my shoulders. I am leaving this week, and I hope you will join me before it is too late—but that is up to you. I can't advise you more than that." He left, promising to come and say goodbye to us before his final departure.

After this conversation I tried, with little success, to explain away the uneasiness Miksche had aroused in me. It recurred on the infrequent occasions when he sent me postcards from France.

The shortage of supplies and money was probably felt most acutely by the civil servants. They were badly underpaid, partly owing to the rate at which their numbers had increased after liberation, when practically everyone who was either unemployed because of the sudden break-down of the German war-machine, or who was not satisfied with his manual work, and who thought he could claim a share in the uprising or in any anti-German activities, applied for a post in the State administration. The further Left his political convictions, the more likely it was that the aspirant would be admitted.

In the spring of 1945, that is, at the time of liberation, the number of civil servants was about 330,000. By the end of the year it grew to 505,000 and in March 1947 the statistics showed that there were already over 600,000 civil servants. At that point new regulations were introduced to curtail further expansion. The size of the civil service organisation as it stood, however, was a considerable obstacle in the way of any move to increase salaries, and none of the parties was anxious to tackle the unpopular task of cutting down staffs before the elections. Something had to be done, nevertheless, to improve conditions of payment, for the sake of the old-established civil servants who had given many years of faithful service. These were nearly all members of the non-Communist parties. Following up an earlier suggestion of Mr. Zenkl, made at Karlovy Vary in July, Minister Václav Majer proposed in November in the name of the Social Democratic Party that Civil Service rates of pay should be increased. His proposition was instantly opposed by the Trade Unions, in conformity with the line taken by the Communist Party. The Unions felt this was interference with their responsibilities, since it was their duty to care for the well-being of their members, of whom the civil servants formed a large proportion, and they made a counter proposal to cut the increases down to quite

negligible amounts; but in view of the fact that the fiscal revenue had proved more favourable than had been expected, and the Treasury was able to meet the additional demand of some 3,500,000,000 crowns (about £17,500,000 sterling), Majer's proposal, which seemed reasonable enough, was accepted by the Government with an even larger majority against the Communists than had been the case with the "millionaire taxation". Mr. Zápotocký, the Communist Trade Union leader, threatened to mobilise the masses of the working people against this policy, and in fact used it later as a pretext to call a Trades Union Congress in Prague. On this, as on other issues, whatever the matter at stake, the Communist policy was to seize any opportunity to stir up discontent and disturbance.

Majer's proposal had also been discussed at a meeting of the Employees' Council in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One of its members, a certain Dr. Chyle, who incidentally had been throughout the war in the United States, declared:

"Civil Service rates of pay are not a matter for discussion by the Employees' Council. The Central Trade Union Council (known in Czech as U.R.O.) will consider the problem and solve it on our behalf better than we could ourselves." Dr. Garaj, a Slovak member of the Press and Information Section, who was the elected Secretary of the Employees' Council, took this statement as a challenge to the rights and duties of the representatives of employees and replied:

"It seems to me that it is not for the first time that these words have been used. Was it not usual in the Nazi movement to say 'The Fuehrer thinks for us'? To those of us who spent most of the war in Gestapo cells and concentration camps, or the Prague Pankrac prison, a suggestion like this is intolerable. We hate it!"

Dr. Chyle could make no reply. But he took good note of Dr. Garaj's comments.

The spokesmen of U.R.O., and especially its Chairman, Mr. Zápotocký, continued to express dissatisfaction with the Government's decision on the question of Civil Service pay, which with their exception had been welcomed on all sides as a first step towards improvement of conditions for a whole class of people. Mr. Zápotocký claimed that the very existence of workers, private employees, tradesmen and small farmers, was endangered, and even that the financial basis of the planned whole-national insurance scheme was being undermined. He still intended to oppose and censure any other proposal than that put forward by U.R.O., in spite of the fact that the matter had been put to the vote and settled by the Government. It was explained to him that the financial difference between the proposal adopted and the

one presented by U.R.O. and rejected was only 3,500 million crowns, which could not possibly unbalance a budget of 75,000 million crowns.

No explanation, however reasonable, was accepted. It became more and more obvious that the Communist spokesman of U.R.O. was himself unable to change his attitude since it was not the question of the salaries of civil servants which was important, but the advantage to which the ensuing confusion and disagreement could be turned. This state of affairs persisted over Christmas and into January. On one occasion Mr. Zápotocký cried at a public meeting in Olomouc: "If Parliament fails to satisfy U.R.O.'s request, we will put forward a new demand—to do away with the Parliament!"

U.R.O. then declared that it would have to refer to the broad masses of its members, in order to hear their views on the matter. A congress was to be held in Prague which, they said, would call together to discuss the problem between eight and ten thousand representatives from factory councils and employees' committees in offices and private undertakings. It was only to be expected that civil servants would not vote against an increase in their own salaries, and a split in the ranks of U.R.O. was considered to be a certain result.

The non-Communist parties, which were solidly together against the Communist Ministers on this issue, declared the congress of factory councils illegal in any case, on the grounds that U.R.O. had no right whatever to challenge the decision of the Government in which every member of U.R.O. was already represented through his party speakers. Neither did U.R.O. have any legal right to call a congress of this kind since there was no provision for this relationship between U.R.O. and the factory councils in the Trade Union regulations.

U.R.O. took no heed. The date of the congress was fixed for 22nd February. It was announced that the main Exhibition Hall of the Prague Sample Fair building would be prepared for this biggest indoor meeting ever held in Prague. The situation was a serious threat to internal order in the country. There was little doubt that those invited to Prague would be delegates approved by the Communist Party who would be prepared to vote for, or hail, every proposal submitted to them.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# Seven Steps to the *Coup d'État*

*"Communism disdains to conceal its views and aims. It openly declares that its ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions."*

KARL MARX's *Manifesto*.

IF ANYONE asked me whom the Communists in Czechoslovakia hated most, I should be hard put to it to find an answer. Judging by the attention they paid Messrs. Hora and Čížek, the two Socialist M.P.s who fought with almost religious fervour against all kinds of intimidation, or, as we called it, "red gestapism", these two gentlemen must have been very high on the list of Enemies of Communism. Perhaps it was Mr. Ferdinand Peroutka, the brilliant journalist, whose pen riddled every attack directed from the Red House in Prague on Czechoslovak democracy, who was the chief target for their hatred. They tried in vain to win him for their cause, so he was dismissed from his well-deserved post as Editor of *Svobodné Noviny* (Free News) even before the Communists had gained complete power. They lost no time in silencing him, certainly as a definite stage in their mobilisation plan for the *coup d'état*. Not even the name of the newspaper survived. It was changed to "People's Newspaper"—probably with some justification, as there was no longer any freedom in Czechoslovakia, and it followed that a "free" newspaper could not exist either. I could name several other people, such as Dr. Drtina, the Minister of Justice, who almost paid with his life for his unpopularity with the Communist Party when the perfume bomb was sent to him; or Dr. Krayna, the scholarly fighter, who also had the honour of being enemy number one to K. H. Frank. If we turn from the world of living enemies to the written word I think there was no doubt that it was a column in *Svobodné Slovo* (Free Word) called "Straight and Clear" which they not only hated, but feared, the most. Its brotherhood of pen warriors gave the Communists a constant headache by exposing their misdeeds, causing frequent alarm to be sounded in Party H.Q. or in the editorial offices of the notorious *Rude Pravo* (Red Right), the Prague counterpart of the Soviet *Pravda* (Truth). How eager the Communists were to counteract the damaging

effect of this column was shown by their planting an agent in the printing shop of *Svobodné Slovo*, who either gave *Rude Pravo* a tip on the telephone or let them have an advance copy to enable them to prepare their defence against the revealing facts in "Straight and Clear". Even then there was very often no answer. In October 1947, for instance, the Communist Party initiated a campaign that put one in mind of the early days of Nazism in Germany. Trained agitators allocated to different districts visited people in their homes, usually on Sunday mornings, and tried to induce them to sign party membership forms. This campaign was supported in the Communist press by articles which were almost a facsimile—except, of course, the party names—of those in the German newspapers in the 'thirties. Their threatening tone was intended to scare people into signing. "Straight and Clear" rose to the occasion. It published an article, entitled, "There is Nothing New under the Sun", from which I should like to quote:

"The best measure of a citizen's freedom in a democratic State is not only what he is allowed to do publicly without being prosecuted, but also what he can do privately without being spied upon. There lies the difference between a democratic and a police State. The other day *Rude Pravo* published a story which convinced us that Czechoslovakia need not be a police State as long as certain duties carried out in a police State by the police force are fulfilled in Czechoslovakia by the organs of the Communist Party.

"How conscientiously this is being done was described on 16th October in *Rude Pravo* where the work of the Communist group in Prague XIX is praised as follows:

"The comrades are aware of every inhabitant in their area. They know all about everyone and have a list for each house. They know that in their region there are 373 citizens not yet organised into any party and they pay successive visits to them. They can tell at any given moment how many people sympathise with the Communist Party, and it is not surprising therefore that in such a well-organised community two comrades collected on one Sunday twenty-eight new signatures!"

As I read this I was struck by its resemblance to an article I wrote for *Svobodné Noviny* after visiting the Czech border territory in 1938, when the Henlein Party was organising subversive activities. This I described in the following terms:

"The Nazi information service is exemplary. Towns and villages are split into districts. Each district consists of several

'friendship groups' and the groups are again divided into 'neighbourhoods', that is, one small street or a larger-sized house containing a number of flats. All reports on personal investigations of individuals are passed on from 'neighbourhood' leaders to 'friendship' leaders, and then on to district leaders until they reach the leader in Prague, or, if necessary, the Fuehrer in Berlin."

I felt this coincidence needed to be emphasized, so I compared the two examples in an article for "Straight and Clear" and signed it with the three letters "Etg", the initial letters of "Escaping the Gestapo"; which expressed the association of ideas and methods I had in mind, as I observed with growing anxiety the activities of the special branch of the Communist movement known as "Agitprop". A few days later "Straight and Clear" disclosed that "Agitprop" had among its well-paid specialists, not only agitators and propagandists from Moscow, but also from the German Nazi movement.

The growing popularity of the column in *Svobodné Slovo* was evidenced by the adoption of its name as a slogan. People of democratic tendencies began to greet each other with the words "Straight and Clear!"

Democracy was so deeply rooted in their minds that when the Czechs heard how the Polish Government had been "Lublinised", how Yugoslavia had been "united", how Rumania had been "inspired" by Mr. Vyshinsky to get rid of her king, or how the Bulgarians had "accepted" the leadership of George Dimitroff, they used to say: "But that couldn't happen here—Czechoslovakia is not the Balkans."

How little we knew to what extent our "balkanisation" had gone in permitting the Communists to put in the field a team which, if it did not surpass, was at least equal, to any that staged the conversion of a State and nation as anti-Communist as Poland was before the war, not to speak of Yugoslavia and the other Balkan countries that had been subjected.

Who were the Titos and Dimitroffs of Czechoslovakia?

The Czechoslovak Communist Party has never had a personality who could win such fame (of a kind) as the Yugoslav or Bulgarian leaders. But they knew how to replace them with teams of experts. One team was known to the public and held the official positions, whilst the second pulled the strings of party activities, ensuring that the doctrines of Marxism and Leninism were strictly practised and that the long-term aim of gaining complete power was never lost sight of, regardless of the means used, or the toll of victims.

The official team was headed for almost twenty years by a member of the all-powerful Politburo in Moscow, Mr. Klement

Gottwald, who was first Prime Minister and then successor to Beneš. Mr. Nosek was nominally responsible for the Ministry of the Interior whose primary task was to reorganise the police as a tyrannical force, so that there could be no possibility of armed opposition whatever situation arose. He was heard to say in October 1947 at a public meeting in Brno Stadium "We are accused of Gestapism. I do not deny it. On the contrary we shall show our opponents that we can do this better than the Germans." Václav Kopecký, the Minister of Information, who was talkative and easily the least intelligent member of the team, had his own task, in which he could be compared with a boy who throws stones to break windows. His activities, which were carried out to the last letter of the written order, usually covered something that was developing under the surface. He was allowed to foretell events with amazing exactitude—because no one believed him—and could then be quoted when they actually happened. The two men who were not members of the Government, Zápotocký and Slánský, were probably the most dangerous of the official team. Zápotocký was responsible for bringing under Communist control the non-political Trade Unions (U.R.O.), which he achieved. Finally there was the Secretary-General of the Communist Party, Rudolf Slánský, an extremely clever and unscrupulous expert in organisation on the true Marxist-Lenin line, who, by his extensive knowledge of social problems, was a skilled master in handling and exploiting the weaknesses and reactions of the working classes to the advantage of the Party. He knew to the last detail what were the resources of manpower to be counted on, and controlled the enormous party funds. I should also mention Mr. Duris in this connection, who, as Minister of Agriculture, gained important positions for the Party among the peasants, and together with Nejedlý, the ambitious Minister of Social Welfare, Široký, the Vice-Prime Minister, Dolanský, the Minister of Finance, Zmrhal, the Minister of Internal Trade—perhaps the least effective of them all—and Clementis, the State Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, closed the ranks behind the front-line members of the official team.

Who were the men really in the background—whose names meant nothing to the Czech public and were never referred to in the Communist press abroad? As long as routine was normal, the last thing they wanted was publicity; but should any of the acknowledged team fail, one of the Communist back-room boys would be ready to step forward immediately. This happened in the case of Dr. Alexej Čepička, the local Communist representative in a part of Moravia. For his personal character he was considered important and ruthless enough to be preserved for future

tasks and was therefore safeguarded as far as possible against discovery by being given a Governmental position, at the same time replacing a Minister who had fallen short of the required standard of efficiency.

Second to Čepička must be considered Josef Smrkovsky. He was the organiser of secret armament dumps and the inventor of the factory militia. It was he who conceived the plan of turning against the people the weapons issued to protect Czech property in the borderland from the hatred of evicted Germans.

Easily the most powerful of this unacclaimed group was Veselý, the embodiment of the Comintern, and its successor, the Cominform, for the whole territory of the Republic. There were two exceptions to the rule of obscurity in this unofficial team, because the secrecy of their mission in the Communist Party consisted in their nominal association with the Social Democratic Party. Their names were Zdeněk Fierlinger, who had been the first post-war Prime Minister and the "grave-digger of the Social Democratic movement"—whose name, like that of the Norwegian, Quisling, had become synonymous with treachery—and Evžen Erban, Mr. Zápotočský's executive in the Trade Unions. Like Čepička, Erban, too, rose suddenly from his office chair to a Cabinet seat. It was the reward of a Judas.

Without the untiring efforts of these men the seven principal events paving the way to the Communist *coup d'état* could not have been accomplished, and probably not even attempted. Most of them have been described more fully elsewhere, but to sum them up in chronological order they took place as follows:

(1) The Košice Government was set up, in which the Communist Party took control of the Ministry of the Interior (in practice the police), Information (that is, all broadcasting), Finance (party funds), Agriculture (a free hand in the distribution of confiscated land), while the crypto-Communist General Svoboda was appointed Minister of National Defence (which eliminated the Army from its potential role as a stabilising non-political element).

(2) The Communists gained control of the Trade Union Movement and of the remaining non-political organisations of nation-wide importance, such as the Union of Liberated Political Prisoners, the Farmers' Union, and the League of Czechoslovak Youth, together with their daily newspapers.<sup>1</sup>

(3) In January 1947 the Communist Prime Minister, Klement

<sup>1</sup>The Communists failed to penetrate the Sokol movement (which in any case was necessarily inactive in the critical days in February, since it had no means of large-scale communication through the radio or press) and the War Veterans'



Gottwald, declared: "In the next elections in 1948 the Communist Party must secure a majority of votes by achieving at least 51 per cent!" Although this declaration, which obviously calculated on the use of other than democratic methods, was—as one of the leading Catholic politicians deduced—generally considered to be a mere election slogan, it was in fact a war cry!

(4) The Slovak Democrats, the majority party in Slovakia, were eliminated without elections and without the firing of one shot—simply by a cleverly executed local *putsch*, which can be considered as the rehearsal for the February *coup d'état* in Prague.

(5) Though the immediate result was a failure, as the "perfume bombs" (since aptly described as "Communist perfume") did not explode, the bomb plot served as an opportunity of testing and proving the complete Communist control of the police force, which sabotaged the investigation, helped to destroy evidence and confirmed the impression already received by the public that there was no effective defence against, or punishment for, Communist terrorist methods.

(6) The Cominform<sup>1</sup> was formed as an internationally unchallenged declaration of psychological, or cold, war against all countries "represented" in this new International through their Communist minorities. They were doomed to subjugation by means of unmistakable interference in their internal affairs (Czechoslovakia was target number one).

(7) The final step was the public declaration of the dates intended as the opening and closing days of the *coup d'état*. These were 22nd February, the day of the illegally-convened congress of 8,000 members of the Factory Councils; and 29th February, which was to be the climax, setting the seal on the fact, to the accompaniment of applause from some 130,000 Communist-led peasants. Lenin's dictum that "there cannot be a revolution unless the peasants take a hand in it" was not overlooked.

The peasants who came to Prague on 29th February had been

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Community which, loyal to the ideals of Masaryk's democracy, in particular those of tolerance and mutual understanding, was in no frame of mind to act as a counter-revolutionary body

<sup>1</sup>Russia dissolved the Comintern at a time when her armies were hard pressed by Hitler. Its revival in the new guise of Cominform—which, in effect, abolished alliances—should have been at once countered by

(1) A three power ultimatum against interference in the political affairs of other countries,

(2) An appeal to the Security Committee of the United Nations, if the ultimatum had not the desired effect,

(3) Interruption of diplomatic relations with all possible economic consequences, if the appeal to United Nations was vetoed. In failing to take these steps the democratic powers once again wrote off Central Europe without attempting opposition

rounded up with deliberate political discrimination and provided with special transport to attend the Congress of Agricultural Committees called by Duris. Since a Minister of Agriculture had no authority whatever to call such a nation-wide congress, this had also been declared illegal by the non-Communist parties, who refused to associate themselves with it in any way. But without any effect on Mr. Duris. The Communist executives went as far as to declare that failure to appear was sabotage. From the moment this announcement about the Congress was made there was no longer any question that the Communist Party had prepared itself to take over total executive power in the State, regardless of existing laws and agreements. In other words, the *putsch* had been staged.

The international public, and to a certain extent even the public in Czechoslovakia, had not been aware of the gigantic struggle fought day by day for the preservation of Czechoslovakia's independence and democracy, or of how many Communist attempts to gain power had been repulsed before they achieved it in February, when only foreign interference saved them from another failure.

The first essay at gaining supremacy was actually made through the National Committees. The war-time activities of the Communist underground movement, far from being concerned with the struggle against the oppressors, which they claimed as their object, worked from the very beginning with one aim in view—that of building up the strength of their organisation which would emerge from the disaster of war as the only effective political body capable of taking over executive power in the country. This attempt almost failed because the majority of the population were active enough in their democratic belief to fight determinedly for the reconstruction of the National Committees on the basis of parity of representation for all political parties. But they were not always successful.

As soon as it was realised that the National Committees could not be brought wholly under control, another plan was put into operation as far back as June 1945. The Social Democratic Party and the Czech Socialist Party were invited to join the formation of a co-ordinated centre for the Socialist parties which was named the "National Bloc of the Working People in Town and Country". It was more briefly referred to as the Socialist Bloc. The motive behind this move was discovered the moment the infant began to take its first steps. The Communists had calculated on the support of Mr. Fierlinger and on the conciliatory attitude of Mr. Laušman, the Minister of Industry, who was known to be attempting to maintain friendly relations on all sides—and at any cost. In practice, Communist proposals

were discussed and agreed upon with the Social Democrats in advance, and the third party, if necessary, was overruled. When the majority thus gained in the Socialist Bloc had approved such proposals, an attempt was made to get them passed as joint Socialist aims by the National Front, where the three Socialist parties held a majority over the two non-Socialist parties, the Catholic People and the Slovak Democrats. This ruse was quickly seen through and the Czech Socialist Party withdrew from the Bloc, which, its purpose defeated, ceased to be active within a month of its foundation.

To compensate for this disappointment the Communist Party now concentrated its full attention on the non-political organisations which were to become an excellent springboard for the capture of decisive key positions in the economic sphere. They succeeded in taking over leadership of the Trade Unions (U.R.O.). At first the force of public opinion was stronger than the will of the Communist Party, and the democratic governmental majority was able to apply corrective measures. The workers themselves had begun to realise that nationalisation, if carried out hastily, was not always in their own interest; but this state of affairs did not last.

I have already described the intention to allow the Red Army trek across Czechoslovak territory on the eve of the 1946 elections, so as to remind the electors where the hidden force behind the Communist activities really lay. Beneš's protest to Marshal Stalin was at that time effective enough to prevent this obvious psychological pressure on the free election procedure by the use of foreign military strength. The election results themselves only reassured the Communists that they could obtain an absolute majority only by applying undemocratic methods.

The loophole again seemed to be within the ranks of the Social Democratic Party, *who usually came to the rescue whenever the Communists were facing a major defeat*. The addition of their votes provided the dreamt-of 51 per cent majority. This policy reached its climax when the pact negotiated secretly by Fierlinger between the two parties was signed, but was made void again when the Brno Congress in November 1947 ousted Fierlinger. Party leadership was given to Laušman, who had suddenly realised that continuation of the policy advocated by Fierlinger would sooner or later mean an end to the Social Democratic Party as an independent unit.

In the Summer of 1947 new pressure was brought to bear on the non-Communist parties. Still only a limited number of politicians knew that the driving force in the background was now the Cominform, set up to challenge the expected successes of the Marshall Plan, with its secretly-prepared plan of conquests

At that time the first large-scale attempt was made to secure weapons to be used, should there be an opportunity, for an uprising based on purely physical superiority. In July the Ministries of Interior and of National Defence, much to the surprise of the public, admitted that they had insufficient manpower to deal with the roving bands of Ukrainian rebels who had filtered through from Polish territory on their way to Austria and were described as Banderovits, after their leader, the mysterious Colonel Bandera. It was suggested that former partisans, in practice mainly Communists or Communist sympathisers, should be rearmed, but when a copy of an instruction fell into the hands of the Czech Socialist Party, disclosing the real aim as the formation of an illegal armed body which, after helping to dispose of the Banderovits, would retain its weapons, the project had to be abandoned. The democratic parties maintained, once they learned of the real intention, that if the total strength of an army of well over a hundred thousand men was unable, with the help of the police, to deal with a few hundred bandits, then it needed reorganisation and eventually changes in leadership. Talk of the Banderovit danger just faded into thin air!

The attention paid to Slovakia in this connection was soon to be diverted to political affairs. There the election results in 1946 had differed considerably from those in the western provinces. Of the two main parties the Communist was much the smaller, drawing only 30 per cent of the total vote, while the Slovak Democratic Party was in a clear majority with 61.43 per cent. This situation was of course unsatisfactory from the Communist point of view. For many months the autonomous body of Slovak Commissioners had been constantly attacked and accused either of neglecting their duties or maintaining treacherous contacts with the Slovak émigrés abroad. The campaign was now intensified to a point where a political crisis was inevitable. The Communists accused the leading members of the Slovak Democratic Party point-blank of subversive activities against the State, of collaboration with the intelligence service of certain "reactionary powers", and of engineering an extensive anti-State plot. The obvious question was left unanswered: why a party enjoying a majority of close on 62 per cent should be plotting against its own interests. The fact remained that the organised discovery of incriminating documents, planted in carefully chosen offices and secretariats of the Democratic Party by agents-provocateur, and a few misled Democrats provided an excuse for drastic measures which were carried out with ruthless determination. Protest meetings which, it was claimed, voiced the "will of the people", were organised with a striking similarity in method to that used later for the Agricultural Congress in

Prague. They demanded a change in representation, and eventually the efficient Communist propaganda-machine, supported not only by the Prague H.Q., but also by the Soviet press, achieved its aim. The Democratic Party was robbed of the majority it had held in the Board of Commissioners, in accordance with the results of the democratic elections in 1946. By threat and trickery they were deprived of three of the nine seats they held in the local Government, thereby increasing the Communist holding from six to nine. Thus what amounted to a *putsch* was carried out not by the Slovak Democrats but by their accusers, the Slovak Communists. There was one object they failed to achieve, thanks to the combined opposition of the other democratic representatives in the Central Government of the National Front in Prague: the dissolution of the Slovak Democratic Party.

The proportionate success they achieved in Slovakia provided the Communist Party with the pattern for the staging of a similar attempt in Bohemia, by discovering "irrefutable" evidence of the anti-State activities of the Czech Socialist Party. The major part of their accusation was formed by the alleged Socialist-run "spy-circle", which was supposed to have undermined the security of the State by selling the secrets of the Stalin plants in Most to an unspecified Western power. Some thirty-six arrests were made, mainly among the members of the British-Czechoslovak Society. One of those arrested was Major Polak, who during the war was liaison officer between the Czechoslovak and British Army H.Q. in Britain, and who then became an officer of the British Council in Prague. He was released with an apology after being held in prison for a whole month. The official communique published by the Ministry of Justice on the whole affair proved beyond doubt that it had been manufactured by agents-provocateur.

Next came a wild accusation that the Socialist Party was urging its members to enter a newly created occupation army in the Western Zone of Germany, which was seeking some fifty thousand foreigners to fill its ranks. No one but the Communists had ever heard of it!

This technique was so childish and transparent that, had there not been a very real and brutal force behind it, it would automatically have destroyed its operators by making it possible to hold them up to ridicule. But as long as the Soviet Union gave official backing in its press and radio, that was more than any Czechoslovak representative dared attempt. The house of cards would have promptly collapsed, with little hope that any friendly powers would have come forward to pick up the non-Communists.

In connection with the accusation of selling the synthetic

petrol production secrets, the fate of the two members of the staff of *Illustrated*, Erich Auerbach, the photographer, and Jack Winocour, the commentator, may be recalled. These two friends of Czechoslovakia arrived in Prague in the summer of 1947 to prepare a series of articles on the country's recovery and speedy return to an organised economy. Though their visit was officially sponsored, wherever they appeared the Communist-instructed police decided they were British spies. In Slovakia they were physically maltreated and a photograph they had taken of the panorama of chimneys in the Stalin plant in Most was found "contradictory to State security". The whole plant, which was German-built, had been expertly photographed on many occasions by the Allied Air Force before it was bombed during the war. *Svobodné Noviny* suggested it was unfortunate that Mr. Auerbach had not taken pictures of the obsolete machinery, since the British might have taken pity and offered new equipment for the whole plant! The need for improvement was certainly indicated since Czechoslovak petrol production, thanks to the Stalin works, was most expensive and uneconomic, being sold at a loss for about 5s. 6d. a gallon.

To return to the attempts to discredit the Czech Socialist Party, these proved to be as ineffective as the more drastic bomb plot. It was plain that unless help came from abroad the means at the disposal of the Communist Party would not suffice for the destruction of the hardy plant of Czechoslovak democracy, which still survived in spite of six years of Nazi domination and over two years of unceasing Communist efforts for supremacy. In the summer of 1947, at the International Trade Union Conference in Prague, Mr. Zápotocký, the Chairman of U.R.O., said:

"We should not hesitate to make a revolution, should foreign influence help the Czechoslovak reactionary forces to gain more power." This threw some more light on the motives for the constant attempts to provoke spy-affairs and treasonable plots involving the non-Communist parties and one or another of the Western nations. The Communist press became just a fresh version of the German newspapers in Hitler's time. "Either . . . Or . . ." was the headline of an article by the Editor-in-Chief of *Rude Pravo*, Mr. Vilem Novy, who in effect demanded unconditional surrender to Communist dictates. Hitler, too, used to cry, "So oder So", when he declared that if peaceful methods failed he could resort to other means. Mr. Novy was pressed to complete his headline, and explain what would happen if there was no surrender. He declined to reply—for the time being.

Mr. Zápotocký was again the more enlightening propagandist. At a U.R.O. meeting he threatened that if the employees in the Civil Service maintained their unfounded claims for increased

rates of pay certain restrictions would be introduced and their future would be safeguarded by direction into the mining or building industries.

About this time the War Veterans Community made a gesture in sending a message of loyalty to the President with an assurance of unlimited confidence in his leadership. The President answered in a letter which was censored before publication in the Communist press. The following paragraphs were left out:

"Uncertainty, disturbance, insincerity, trickery and deception are means used in the political fight. Nearly all of you who have worked for the liberation of our country or who were in the concentration camps have agreed with me that the most devilish invention of the Nazis was the constant, nerve-racking and mentally-disarming tension and treachery they managed to spread everywhere. We must not fall so low as to use the same methods, which we were all attempting to throw off with our combined strength and ability.

"If we fail in this, if we fail to prove that by adopting the typical Czechoslovak democratic methods of Masaryk a synthesis of social discipline and individual freedom can be achieved, the entire world will see the incompatibility between these two principles. It would create a complete lack of confidence, a new preventive rearmament and all the precautionary measures in which lie the seed of future conflict."

This was the President's warning, which could not be allowed to reach the ears of the Communist section of the public in Czechoslovakia. There was to be no hitch in the plans of the Cominform, which had been inaugurated on 28th September. Its initial task was to speed up the bolshevisation of those countries represented in the Cominform which hitherto had managed to preserve some independence, namely Czechoslovakia, Italy, France and Hungary, which in turn would mean the automatic subjugation of Finland and Austria, the two non-Cominform countries in the Soviet sphere of interest. Simultaneously it had to prevent the successful operation of the Marshall Plan, as economic well-being in Western Europe would induce the countries behind the Iron Curtain to seek co-operation with the Western hemisphere, apart from the necessity of maintaining an unstable economic situation throughout Europe as the ideal condition for encouraging revolutionary tendencies generally.

To provide office and housing accommodation in Belgrade for more than four hundred of the Cominform headquarters staff, recruited and delegated from all Cominform countries, the Yugoslav authorities decided to resettle in the provinces certain

non-productive classes of people from Belgrade. The expulsion of several thousand citizens, who had already been deprived of their employment and property when smaller industrial undertakings were nationalised, followed.

Actually the "Office for International Relief for Fighting Democracies" had been established as an advance post of the Cominform some five months before. It functioned under cover of great secrecy, preparing, for instance, the organisation of different international fighting brigades. Under the Cominform this office reappeared as the "Secretariat for Military Development", where Russian, Polish, and Yugoslav officers planned the strategy of bringing the different national armies of the countries behind the Iron Curtain into the service of the Communist movement.

The "Office of Psychological Warfare" was another Cominform Department which was established with the purpose of *using words as weapons*. A fortnightly review, *For Lasting Peace and People's Democracy*, was founded for publication in several languages. Transmitters, erected and manned by Soviet technicians in Berlin and in Luhljana in Yugoslavia, were beamed not only westward but also towards the Far East, where the development of the Communist movement rested with a body described as the Anti-Colonial Secretariat, yet another special branch of the Cominform directed by Mme Melman, an expert in Oriental questions. The tentacles of the organisation reach into China, Dutch East Indies, and Indo-China, as well as into Hindustan and Pakistan, in somewhat similar fashion to the pre-war Nazi "Colonial Centre" in Stuttgart. The Czechoslovak Communists had their own expert representatives in most of the new Cominform departments in Belgrade.

Mr. Jindrich Vesely, one of the Communist back-room boys, was the chief liaison officer between the Belgrade centre and the Prague Red H.Q. The Communist deputy, Mr. Vodicka, who was one of the most reliable members of the group of tried partisans of Communism, was entrusted with the task of co-ordinating the secret rearmament of the Communist fighting forces in line with the large-scale plans drawn up by the military office in Belgrade. In this capacity he took part in conferences held in the Russian zone of Germany in the autumn of 1947 under the guidance of the chief of the Soviet Security Police, Beria.

All these activities, although known in detail to only a very limited number of tried Communists, gave the leading clique confidence and encouragement. From time to time, under stress of attack from the opposition, there were slips of the tongue, and hints of what was being prepared in the underground were dropped. Mr. Homola, for instance, an M.P., when unable to



prevent the passing of a law by the strength of his arguments, uttered the following sentence:

"Well, why shouldn't it be passed, as it's only a matter of weeks till we can do just what we want!"

Another time a Silesian Communist M.P., Franta Mraz, tried to encourage his opponents by stating on July 11th in Fryštát:

"If you go with us, we shall bury you with music and flowers, and if you don't, six feet of soil and a handful of calcium chloride will be good enough."

The question now arises: how did the nation respond to such a blend of terror and propaganda, promises and commands, and to all this un-Czechoslovak and bullying behaviour by the Communists in their striving for power? In spite of the odds against them, the defenders of democracy in Czechoslovakia put up a gallant fight, and not altogether without results. However contradictory it sounds, I venture to say that the definite victory by the true democrats over Communism which was in sight, decided the country's downfall, and at the same time gave testimony that only the use of subversive methods, intimidation, and foreign support, brought about the defeat of the majority.

The best example of the reaction of the public was provided by the results of the Gallup Poll which was carried out early in January 1948, with the object of making a pre-election survey of public opinion. A similar survey made in 1946, before the first post-war elections, differed by approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  per cent from the actual election results. In 1948 the poll indicated a considerable loss of votes for the Communist Party amounting to a drop of 10 per cent of the 38 per cent gained in 1946! This meant that instead of the clear majority of 51 per cent they had made their target, their efforts were about to be rewarded with less than 30 per cent of the total vote. It should be taken into account that the poll was organised by the Institute for Research of Public Opinion which was sponsored by the Communist Ministry of Information, leaving no ground for doubt that it could have been engineered to the disadvantage of the Communists. On hearing the results, Mr. Rudolf Slánský, the Secretary-General of the Communist Party, called a meeting of the Prague Politburo to discuss the serious implications of the survey. It was concluded that an electoral defeat would be insupportable and that the only way out of this unpleasant situation was to execute the already formulated plan for a police *putsch* as soon as possible. The survey also disclosed that the greatest loss of the Communist vote was to be expected in Eastern Slovakia, particularly in the neighbourhood of the Soviet border, where some news of conditions prevailing under the Soviet regime was reaching the ears of the population.

The results of the elections for the University and High School Students' Committees, also in January, confirmed the prediction of the Gallup Poll. The Communists received in most cases less than 25 per cent of the total vote. In the Agricultural College in Prague, for instance, the non-Communist parties received 684 votes and 13 seats, while the Communists had 146 votes and 3 seats. That seemed to be a fairly good example of the feelings of the countryside shortly before the May elections.

The Prague Politburo therefore gave full powers to the Commander of the Party's secret forces, Josef Smrkovský, to declare a state of readiness for his workers' militia in the second half of February. It was also agreed with the Ministry of Interior special branch that weapons would be available throughout the Central Council of the Trade Unions, a Communist-controlled body which had representatives in all munition factories.

On the whole, public opinion was well summed up in an article by the State Prosecutor, Dr. Drábek, which appeared under the headline "Killing Propaganda" in a leading weekly called *Dnesek*. The article itself was proof that the press was still free in Czechoslovakia for those who had the courage to write the full truth. Dr. Drábek pointed out that Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship was endangered by the attempts of the Communist Party to monopolise it for itself. He said, in sarcasm, that it was alarming that Czech youth was refusing to learn Russian, being bewildered by the replacement of the pictures of Hitler and Hacha with a picture of Stalin. He deplored the falsification of history by teaching that the Red Army alone liberated Prague, when everyone knew that the U.S. spearhead was in the outskirts of Prague while the Red Army was still some hundred miles away. "It is impossible," he wrote, "to tell the nation of Masaryk, that in Soviet Russia everything is wonderful, and to describe U.S.A. and Britain as the seat of reaction which is facing collapse. Why not tell the people that U.S.S.R. is exhausted by war and cannot deliver to us the raw material we need, and that U.S.S.R. is one of our smallest customers. Lies are doing real damage to the cause of the true friendship between our two countries." Dr. Drábek paid dearly for his frankness. To-day he is a refugee.

At this time the cinemas playing Soviet films were empty, while those showing American, British and French films were sold out. A similar situation existed on the book market, where translations of even valuable Soviet literary works were a rarity, because the forced, or "killing" propaganda of the Communist Party about Soviet Russia had defeated its own ends and actually created an aversion to any subject connected with the name of the U.S.S.R.

I went with my wife, Pat, to see the special news-reel on

Princess Elizabeth's wedding. The cinemas showing it were packed for several weeks on end, and there was no hope of getting a seat without booking a long way ahead. The film was accompanied by a Czech commentary and when the enthusiastic crowd cheering the Royal Family in front of Buckingham Palace was shown, the commentator said:

"It was just an occasion for people who like to see luxury and who enjoy being in a crush." The commentary was prepared under the supervision of the Ministry of Information. Pat had actually decided some time before that she would like to tell the British people how the English girls living abroad felt about the wedding, and she prepared a short-wave broadcast in English for transmission a day or two before the occasion. Mr. Tosek, the Communist chief of all short-wave broadcasts, did not receive it with great enthusiasm. Since Pat was not a Czech and an experienced broadcaster it was difficult for him to refuse it altogether, but he pointed out that "people in Czechoslovakia are not interested in Royal weddings—they look on the whole affair with great scepticism", and that, "even in Britain the Royal Family is not very popular", and even more deprecatory comments which I do not care to reproduce. Mr. Tosek forgot that the windows of the British Information Service in Prague, where photographs were on display, were day and night in a state of siege and that in the cinemas there was applause—an unusual thing in Prague—when Royalty appeared. The democratic press, especially organs of the Socialist, Catholic, and other non-Communist parties, printed long articles accompanied by drawings or photographs, and my article in *Svobodné Noviny*, the daily organ of the Czechoslovak cultural organisations, on how we soldiers of the Czechoslovak Army in Britain were fortunate enough to meet the Princesses in the garden of Windsor Castle, was front-paged. The Communist press reports were extremely brief and mainly consisted of critical remarks about the number of people who fainted, and similar incidents. This attitude only seemed to increase the interest of the Czechoslovak people.

No event, however, influenced public opinion more than the publication of the first volume of Dr. Beneš's *Memoirs*. They were on sale in October 1947, and the first two editions, each of 50,000 copies, were snapped up, although the price of the book in crowns was nearly a pound—no trifle for a Czech pocket. By the spring of 1948 some 250,000 copies had been bought. The book dealt with the events described in the sub-title, "From Munich to a New War and on to a New Victory". President Beneš dealt in great detail with his activities during the war, especially with the negotiations for and the signing of the treaty of friendship with Soviet Russia. Many of his revelations were

sensational, and caused indignation among the Communists. They did not care for this declaration of views by the highest authority of the State on, for instance, the sudden change of attitude to the war effort on the part of the Communists as soon as U.S.S.R. entered the war. The publication of Dr. Krajina's reports on the underground work of the Communist Party at home, which were transmitted to Dr. Beneš during the war, simply tore away their pretence of nationalism and threw even more light on their allegiance to the Kremlin.

A certain leakage of information played an important part in the popularity of the book. It was somehow disclosed that Dr. Beneš had changed the manuscript just before publication, by making alterations of some significance such as the tense of verbs. The sentence "I am convinced of the sincerity of the Soviet Union" became "Then I was still sure of the sincerity of the Soviet Union". In other places he added comments such as "From our side it was meant sincerely". This was almost a suggestion that Beneš had now come to the conclusion that the other side, meaning the U.S.S.R., had signed pacts and made promises she was not prepared to honour. It was the first time that the President had written of the possibility of Soviet treachery.

At the end of January a trickle of refugees from Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia managed to cross the almost impassable frontier. They reported to the Czechoslovak authorities that they had been made to leave their homes in the towns and villages near to the Czechoslovak border, which had been requisitioned to meet the needs of the Red Army.

When people began to suspect, and the better-informed began to realise, that the governmental representatives of the Communist Party, though in a minority, were no longer prepared to accept the results of a democratic vote, they began to ask each other what the Communists were up to. For a year past the country had been driven from one political crisis to another, and as soon as one chasm was bridged over—usually with much sacrifice on the democratic side—an even wider and more dangerous one appeared. This had been planned well ahead with a definite purpose. In January, while the crisis concerned with the settlement of Civil Service pay was still not over, a new one was boiling up. The whole conception of State security was involved.

In principle the controversy was nothing new. The desires of the Communist Party were usually presented as the will of the people. Criticism of the Communist policy was explained as an attack on the whole national front, or, alternatively, on the U.S.S.R. In short, every attempt was made to identify the very existence of the country with the fate of the Communist movement.

As long as this was limited more or less to debates in ideological terms, it was merely a matter to be contested or disregarded as the situation dictated. But the new issue at stake was the complete subjugation of the uniformed and plainclothes police to party administration and command.

It had been known for a long time that the Ministry of the Interior was proceeding with the complete reorganisation of the police force. The first step was actually taken immediately after liberation, when the force was merged with the gendarmerie. Until then only the police had been under the direct influence of the civilian authorities, while the gendarmerie was considered to be a part of the military forces. The merger, of course, gave much wider powers to the Ministry of the Interior. In November 1947 Mr. Hora, the Socialist M.P., suggested in Parliament that the figures of the police force officially quoted seemed to be inaccurate and that in fact many more men had been recruited than was admitted. He also stated that the nature of their activities gave the impression that the police force was an organ that was not serving the country but one party only. To this was added information that all non-Communist members of the police force had been confidentially marked in the records as "unfriendly to the new regime", which, in blunter terms, meant "unfriendly to the totalitarian methods of the Communist Party". In December the same M.P. wrote an article entitled, "Are We Living in a Police State?" He was able to produce evidence that the police were interested in hearing what innocent citizens talked about in private, and in taking note of people who attended non-Communist political meetings, while private correspondence was being held up, censored, and even photographed. "Under these conditions," wrote Mr. Hora, "it is no wonder that there is so much talk of a police state, that people are living in fear of mental and even physical terrorism." He asked finally: "I urge all of you who value the principles of freedom and justice to do everything to prevent our national police from becoming the political tool of a party that aims at the complete control of the whole State security organisation. We must take to heart the lesson of the past." A fortnight later Dr. Bundza, a Catholic M.P., asked the Minister of the Interior: "Is it true that at a meeting of the Communist members of the police force you stated that 10,000 new recruits would be accepted? This would be contradictory to the decision of the Government that no new appointments are to be made in the State administration." It could not be denied.

For the present that was all the public was able to learn about the imminent danger of Czechoslovakia becoming a police State. It was not generally known that while this dispute was being fought out in Parliament and in the press, other and more far-

reaching steps were being taken. There was a move for closer co-operation of the Czechoslovak Security Police and Intelligence Services with the Soviet Secret Police (N.K.V.D.), which established Czech police-training centres not only in Czechoslovakia but also in the U.S.S.R. Meanwhile the special training of two new police shock regiments under Soviet instructors was nearing its completion.

The struggle for Czechoslovakia's internal peace and democracy was reaching a climax. It reached a critical stage when it became known that the eight remaining regional commanders of the police in Prague, who did not happen to be members of the Communist Party, were either retired or sent to unimportant posts in the provinces. Their dismissal became a matter for urgent discussion by the Government. On 13th February the Government passed a motion of censure on this action, which had been taken by the Police Commander of Bohemia, Colonel Dyba. At the same meeting the Minister of Justice, Dr. Drtina, made a statement in connection with the investigation into the Krčman bomb plot. A special commission was appointed to consider the evidence assembled on the case as well as the reorganisation of the police force. It was to submit the findings to the Government. The Czech Socialists, Catholic People's Party, Slovak Democrats and Social Democrats voted solidly in favour of the motion, and the Communist minority was completely isolated.

Two days later the Minister of the Interior, Nosek, did not attend the Cabinet session. It was ascertained that the decision of the Government had been ignored and that the order dismissing the police officers had not been withdrawn. The Minister of Information, Kopecký, acting on behalf of the Minister of the Interior, was unable to give any explanation, and the work of the Government came to a standstill. Before the next Cabinet meeting was due on 17th February, a letter was sent to the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, on behalf of the twelve non-Communist Ministers, demanding a clear answer regarding the decision made on 13th February. They were invited to attend the meeting of the Cabinet the next day to listen to what Mr. Nosek had to say. As it was known that the command of the Government had still not been executed, the only condition on which the twelve Ministers were prepared to attend the meeting was the reinstatement of the eight police officers. This was not done.

Under these circumstances the twelve Ministers concluded that since it was impossible to continue to accept responsibility in a Government whose decisions were not respected, the only possible course was to offer their resignations in protest.

The Communists lost no time. As soon as the determined stand of the Ministers became known, a manifesto was issued accusing

"reactionary elements in the Government and their parties of attempting to break up the National Front and preparing a non-Parliamentary Government consisting mainly of non-political experts" The Prime Minister went to inform the President, who also received the Vice-Prime Minister, Dr Zenkl, and Dr. Ripka

Dr Beneš had expected the governmental crisis to break before long as a result of the Trade Union Congress. It was certain that resolutions would be passed demanding further nationalisation and other steps which would overreach the limits within which the non-Communist parties were prepared to co-operate. It seemed to be a more advisable course for the Ministers to resign as a protest against the illegal measures taken in regard to the police than to give the Communists the opportunity of declaiming that they were standing in the way of "progress". It was agreed with the President that he would not accept the resignations, unless a reasonable solution of the crisis was found that would preserve the parliamentary democratic regime



## CHAPTER SIX

### Valerian Alexandrovitsch Zorin

*"For those who treasure the great heritage of Western civilisation, and whom God has blessed with the power to defend it, the hour has struck to call a halt to the Fifth Column in its advance to the West, and to say to the Great Power behind it in clear and unmistakable terms: Thus far and no farther."*

FIELD-MARSHAL SMUTS.

Thursday, 19th February.

TWENTY-FOUR hours after the Governmental dispute arose over the police purge which threatened to lead to an open crisis, on a frosty Thursday morning, a Soviet Dakota landed on the Ruzyně airfield near Prague. In it was the former Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, now Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Valerian Alexandrovitsch Zorin, who had come to Prague to carry out a duty never before assigned to a Deputy Foreign Minister. This was nothing less than to supervise deliveries of grain. According to the official press agency, C.T.K., this was his major task. Apparently he was also to take part, at the request of Mr. Gottwald, in the forthcoming celebrations of the thirtieth anniversary of the birth of the Red Army, staged under the auspices of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Friendship Society.

At the airport Mr. Zorin was met by his Czechoslovak counterpart, Dr. Vladimír Clementis, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. The first visit he paid, even before he went to his hotel, was to Jan Masaryk, the Foreign Minister, who was confined to his private apartment in the Czernin Palais with influenza.

The answer I had from one of Masaryk's private secretaries, when I asked what was being discussed, was self-explanatory: "Not the grain deliveries!" No time was wasted on that subject during his visit, which reminded one forcibly of the circumstances in which Mr. Vyshinsky visited Rumania in 1947 when Groza's Communist-controlled Government suddenly came to power after Radescu's all-party Government had been overthrown. It was later possible to piece together some account of what had taken place during those first memorable talks.

Mr. Zorin explained to Mr. Masaryk that his Government was of the opinion that, in Czechoslovakia, elements that could not be considered reliable from the Soviet point of view were getting the



upper hand. He went on to say that the present international situation required stricter adherence to the policy of the Slav bloc and its allies. That could not be achieved so long as activities which were contradictory to those aims were not only tolerated but even furthered by parties and persons who purported to be the supporters of Soviet-Czechoslovak co-operation.

Mr. Masaryk could not accept these dogmatic accusations, and attempted to obtain more precise information. He quickly realised that there were no specific objections other than those aired in connection with the Ministry of Interior espionage scares and trumpeted by the Communist press, which were not paid more attention in Czechoslovakia than was their due as pre-election propaganda. He did not fail to say so to Mr. Zorin.

His guest became impatient and urged Masaryk to understand the full gravity of the problem. The Soviet leaders, he said, shared the concern of Mr. Gottwald, whose party had no other intention than to exclude persons and factions undermining the security of the State and its relations with the U.S.S.R.

The Czech Minister expressed his surprise and replied that until now matters evidently known to Mr. Zorin had been completely unknown to him, even in his capacity as an active member of the present Government. He stressed that he would be the first man to condemn anything that was contrary to Czechoslovakia's pledges to her greatest ally. On the other hand he had often been concerned about the demands put forward by the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Masaryk mentioned the threatening attitude of the Communist members of the Government, whenever the majority accepted proposals not altogether in line with the Communist Party programme. The instances of further nationalisation, of the capital levy on millionaires, and of civil servants' pay, were mentioned, as well as the latest events connected with the police purge.

Mr. Zorin scarcely lent an ear to Mr. Masaryk's appeal that the Communist Party, too, should make concessions, especially to the desires of a clear majority. He insisted that the Communist Party was not seeking complete control of power in the country, but the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, would be unable to make further concessions to reactionary elements hostile to Soviet Russia. They must be brought under control and made to leave the Government, while their agents had to disappear from public life. This was the confirmed opinion of the Soviet Government, which, he said, "in present circumstances, has no other desire than to see Mr. Gottwald's efforts meet with success". Never a voluble man, Zorin could hardly have expressed the Soviet attitude more briefly or concisely than on this occasion.

Ministerial staff, hovering about the corridors as he departed,

could read nothing from his impassive face. By that time a second plane had already landed in Ruzyne, swooping down to earth from the west. It was Mr. Lawrence Steinhardt, the American Ambassador, who was returning to Prague after nearly three months in the States, where he had undergone an operation. To the pressmen assembled at the airport he declared that he had reason to believe that he had succeeded in securing a loan of 25,000,000 dollars for Czechoslovak purchases of cotton, and that he still hoped Czechoslovakia might at a later date profit from, or even partake in, the Marshall Plan.

In the meantime the National Front had made another futile attempt to hold a governmental session at which it was proposed to discuss the failure of the Ministry of the Interior to carry out the governmental ruling on the reinstatement of the eight dismissed police officers. This was unconditionally refused by the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, on the ground that no such matter was on the agenda! He desired to open a discussion on the new Constitution. Failing to achieve this, he suspended the session and set out with Mr. Nosek to consult the President. The Central Executive Committees of the Czech Socialist, Catholic, and Slovak Democratic Parties announced, after taking counsel for several hours, their intention of withdrawing from the Cabinet meetings unless the Government's decisions were carried out immediately. The Social Democrats were not as drastic, but shared the opinion of the other three parties that the Cabinet decision on the police controversy should be executed without delay.

The tension in the Government had already spread to the public and local strikes and protest meetings concerned with demands for further nationalisation were held in several big factories, inspired by the Trade Unions and their spokesmen. In the Prague tram-depot nervous friction between the employees led to fights between members of different political sections.

In the streets people were discussing the meaning and aims of a manifesto issued by the Communist Party, accusing the non-Communist parties of plotting against the National Front and of planning the replacement of the present Government by a regime of civil servants and other non-political experts. The manifesto asked the supporters of the Communist Party to stand by ready to defend the republic and the democratic regime against the forces of international reaction.

The conference of the three Foreign Ministers, Mr. Modzelewski of Poland, Mr. Simic of Yugoslavia, and Mr. Masaryk, held in Prague during 17th-18th February (the two days preceding the arrival of Mr. Zorin), and dealing with the question of their countries' attitude to the existing conditions in Germany, passed nearly unnoticed. A declaration was issued stating that

the Governments of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Poland were troubled with the slow progress of demilitarisation and denazification and that the partition of Germany was a threat to European peace. The conference, which took place on Polish initiative, no doubt with Soviet prompting, and was obviously meant to strengthen the Soviet standpoint towards the approaching meeting of the Big Powers in London, created no impression in a country where the atmosphere was charged with imminent internal issues.

The manifesto against the non-Communist parties was soon booming out over the Prague street broadcasting system which the Germans completed during the war, as an air-raid warning system.

"Stand by, stand by—defend democracy," it said. "Be ready for anything; your country is in danger! Citizens, it is your duty to be ready! The reactionary forces with their support from abroad are stronger than ever." "Be on your guard!" the excited voice repeated over and over again. No one knew quite where the danger was to come from, but they were advised in the same bulletin to look to the Communist Party as the only defender of democracy. Soviet and other partisan songs concluded each announcement.

The crowds of people assembled in front of the different Party Headquarters and editorial buildings grew steadily, and the manifesto and the other issues at stake were discussed until long after midnight. Prague went to sleep in the early morning hours in anxious expectation of further developments.

*Friday, 20th February.*

"WE WILL NOT TOLERATE A POLICE REGIME" was the front-page headline of the Czech Socialist *Free Word*. The article below declared that not only the Socialist Party but all non-Communist Parties were united in their desire to maintain peace and security for all. According to the writer, the Social Democratic M.P., Mr. Kubat, had announced that the leading police officials were receiving their orders regularly and directly from the Central Secretariat of the Communist Party. Also the Catholic M.P., Dr. Bundza, had given evidence in Parliament that his party functionaries had been prevented by Communist-directed action, developed under police protection, from carrying out their duties.

The Communist press, however, announced innocently, without reference to the latest events, that the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister had seen Vaclav Majer, the Food Minister, the night before to discuss Czech rations with him. It was not mentioned that their meeting had lasted for several hours during which

Mr. Zorin had urged Mr. Majer to follow the advice of Mr. Fierlinger in co-operating more closely with the Communist Party, to save the country from reactionaries and foreign influence. Mr. Majer politely but resolutely declined to make any promises without consulting his colleagues in the Government; and so Mr. Zorin left to fulfil his other engagements. In the early hours he was reminding Mr. Laušman, the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, of his war-time visit to Russia, and of the suffering and sacrifices of the Soviet Union which would all be in vain if this country was now to be dominated by the enemies of Socialism and progress. His accusations against the non-Communist parties and Ministers, concerning their contacts with foreign reactionaries, which could not be tolerated and would force the Soviet Union to take steps to safeguard Czechoslovak independence, evidently made some impression on Mr. Laušman. He promised to talk to Majer and went to see him personally as soon as Mr. Zorin had left. Their discussion was not long, but heated, and to use the words of Mr. Holub, a Social Democratic M.P., "Mr. Laušman left in such a hurry that he lost his hat!" Majer stood firmly behind Beneš and Masaryk and did not intend to take advice or orders from a Soviet envoy, even through the medium of his own Party Chairman. Laušman's mission was a failure.

The Governmental meeting was to begin at 10 a.m. Czech Socialist Party members were awaiting, in the office of Mr. Zenkl, the Vice-Prime Minister, an answer to a further letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, in which Dr. Zenkl confirmed that he and his colleagues were prepared to attend the session only when they were given assurance that the decision made by the Government on 13th February had been carried out. "No useful purpose would be served by discussing and deciding upon new matters," ran the letter, "if the old decisions are not to be honoured. I believe that the rest of the Government is of the same opinion." Similar action reaffirming the first communication sent to Mr. Gottwald on 17th February was taken by the Catholic and Slovak Democratic Parties. The Social Democrats, who were informed by Dr. Ripka through Mr. Majer, that his colleagues were prepared to resign, held an all-night conference at which it was decided that their Ministers would not resign but would refuse to take part in any other than a full coalition Government, which should be preserved until the elections were over. They, too, supported the demand that the governmental decision reached on 13th February must be carried out. The Prime Minister, in his written answer, commanded Dr. Zenkl to attend the next governmental session, together with all his colleagues, as the Minister of the Interior

and the Minister of National Defence would make important declarations in connection with the accusations of the *Free Word* about the police force.

A second letter was then sent to the Prime Minister in which it was stated that his letter (No. 772) could not be considered as an answer to the question that had been presented. The condition for their attendance at the session had not been fulfilled. "But," the letter continued, "if there is important information to be announced by the Ministers of the Interior and of National Defence, we beg you to publish it, in order not to delay the further course of events." The exchange of letters showed clearly that the Communist Party had no intention of enabling a settlement to be reached on the conditions in the police force. In the course of the day letters of resignation addressed to the President were handed in on behalf of the following twelve members of the Government:

*Czech Socialists:* Dr. Zenkl (Vice-Prime Minister), Dr. Stránský (Minister of Education), Dr. Drtina (Minister of Justice), and Dr. Ripka (Minister of Foreign Trade).

*Catholic People's Party:* Msgr. Šrámek (Deputy Prime Minister), Msgr. Hála (Minister of Posts), Mr. Kopecký (Minister of Public Works), and Dr. Procházka (Minister of Health).

*Slovak Democratic Party:* Dr. Kočvara (Deputy Prime Minister), Dr. Pičtor (Minister of Transport), Dr. Franek (Unification of Law), and Mr. Lichner (Under-Secretary for National Defence).

Soon afterwards it was announced that the Social Democratic Ministers had decided to put their mandates at the disposal of the Party Executive which was to decide whether they would resign or not.

The resignation of the Slovak Democratic members of the Government had actually been decided upon that day shortly before Mr. Zorin, accompanied by the chief of the Soviet Commercial Mission in Czechoslovakia, Mr. Bakunin, paid an official visit to Dr. Pičtor, the Minister of Transport, ostensibly in connection with the Soviet grain deliveries. On leaving, Mr. Zorin mentioned to Dr. Pičtor that he was surprised at the attitude of the resigning Ministers and of Dr. Beneš who this time was acting against the will of the broad masses of the people. "If this is their answer to our good will," said Mr. Zorin, "our duty will be to back the decision of the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, and his party. The Soviet Union never deserts her friends!" These last words, however casually dropped, were certainly intended to make a calculated impression on those involved in the crisis and to cause them to think twice.

As soon as the resignations became known, the Communist Party issued a new proclamation which stated that those resigning had made their last attempt to bring about the downfall of the Government. They had excluded themselves from the National Front and were acting against the interests of their country. The Communist Party considered them to be unworthy of any further co-operation. Mr. Gottwald saw the President and expressed his intention of filling the vacant places in the Government by reliable men who would give a guarantee not to turn hostile to the People's Democracy and her Soviet Ally. The President's answer was that the Communist Party, being the strongest, had the right to form the Government, but that he would not tolerate the exclusion of any group.

The Communists were prepared for any move by their opponents. Their plan of carrying out the *putsch* on the occasion of the Congress of Factory Councils, on 22nd February, was to be put into action immediately. Security measures were taken in the broadcasting building at once. It was occupied by armed police, and twelve of the non-Communist employees, including the announcers Mancal and Kozak, who had broadcast the appeals for help at the time of the Prague revolution in May 1945, were forbidden to enter the building. The news bulletins transmitted now consisted entirely of news from Soviet or other Communist sources. Reports from Reuter, United Press and other agencies were replaced by those supplied by the Prague office of Telepress working under the Sudeten German Communist Dr. Jaksch. Mr. Hronek, the Communist chief of the Radio News Service, personally ordered a further purge of the personnel and directed a campaign attacking the Ministers who had just resigned from the Government. They were accused of having acted in the interest of, and upon orders from, foreign enemies of the nation. (A Communist statement went as far as to say, "a flood of spies from the West is entering this country in collaboration with the resurrected intelligence staff of the former German General, Guderian".) The radio bulletin ended with an appeal to all working people to attend the big meeting which would take place on Saturday in the Old Town Hall Square, where the Prime Minister was to explain the whole matter in the right light.

According to plan, Communist meetings for their party members and sympathisers were called all over the country. On the outskirts of Prague members of the two newly-formed shock regiments of the police force, specially trained by instructors who had passed through Soviet schools, suddenly appeared. The Ministry of the Interior, in co-operation with the leaders of U.R.O., began the distribution of weapons to the workers' militia

organised by Mr. Smrkovsky. The number of new rifles and revolvers which became available indicated that the net of secret armament dumps must have been established well ahead and with great efficiency. Wherever necessary the factory militia was reinforced by reliable Communist elements.

*Saturday, 21st February.*

As I went by tram to my office the next morning Prague seemed to be full of policemen. Armed with rifles, they paraded in pairs through the streets and stood guard in front of public buildings and at approaches to bridges over the River Vltava, mingling with the passers-by. The Central Post Office, including the International Cable and Telegram Exchange, had all been occupied.

The usual policemen on guard at the Czernin Palais were reinforced, and others patrolled the long corridors, in front of my office too, where I had my usual morning task before me, the preparation of a survey of the Czechoslovak internal situation which would be sent out over the Foreign Office transmitter for the information of our Embassies abroad.

I wrote a short introduction, mentioning the latest events in the Government, the names of the resigning Ministers, and the meeting to be held that morning, and concluded by summing up the declarations of the Executive Committees of the four governmental parties, each expressing its view on the governmental crisis. The report, which was described as a "circular telegram", was almost ready when Mr. Klinger, a Communist colleague from the Press Section, arrived. He had been to the radio building first, he explained, as Mr. Zink, the Foreign Office spokesman in the short-wave transmission, who usually gave an account of the day's press, also for the benefit of diplomatic representatives abroad, was among those who had been forbidden entry to the radio premises. Klinger was in a cheerful frame of mind and remarked that we were living in a "great time". He went on: "I was on the phone to the Under-Secretary" (Dr. Clementis), "and for the time being special measures are to be taken to prevent misinformation being sent abroad. We are to transmit official material only. No press commentaries, only what has already been released through official C.T.K. agency channels, and of course special announcements from the Foreign Office."

"What about the circular telegram?" I asked. "It's already written." Mr. Klinger took the three-page report, looked at it, and replied casually: "I'll pass that for to-day, but I think two pages will be enough in the future." He went next door and read through what I had just dictated before bringing it back to my office.

"I had to shorten it a bit; the transmitter will be too busy to-day." To my astonishment, although the report on the decisions of the Communist Executive Committee remained unchanged, the next item read:

"The Czechoslovak Socialist Party Executive Committee was in session all night. No official report was issued."

The reports of the meetings of the Executive Committees of the Social Democratic and Catholic People's Parties, which had made similar resolutions and decisions to that of the Czech Socialists, confirming their condemnation of the Trade Union Congress, and the Peasants' Rally, and above all dissociating themselves entirely from the Action Committees<sup>1</sup> and forbidding their members to take part in all three on pain of party expulsion, had also been crossed out. The brief comment that no official report had been issued was inserted in their place.

This was not what I considered freedom of information. Two minutes later I placed the telegram on Masaryk's desk, and he was not less surprised than I had been when he saw the cancellations made by Mr. Klinger. Leaving him pondering them I paused for a while in the next room to listen to the radio with Mr. Masaryk's secretaries, Dr. Soukup and Dr. Špacek. The reporter was just describing how workers and employees from the suburbs were coming to the meeting in the Old Town Hall Square. Since the meeting had been organised by the Communist Party, calling upon its local secretariats to rally members to the support of Gottwald, with the disapproval of other parties, it was not difficult to judge where the sympathies of the gathering crowd would be. The voice of the announcer betrayed symptoms of the atmosphere of emotional tension.

Then the voice of Premier Gottwald was heard. He began with a categorical statement that the decision of the governmental majority, in ordering that no more Communists were to be allowed by the Ministry of the Interior to take leading positions in the police force, was unlawful and unconstitutional. Therefore the Minister of the Interior had not felt bound to carry it out. This attitude had become a pretext for resignations, but the true reason for these was that the reaction at home, supported by foreign reactionaries, wanted to shatter the work of the Government, undermine friendship with the Soviet Union, and make

<sup>1</sup>On Friday night the Communist Party issued an appeal, that "Action Committees [Akční výbory]" composed of "reliable elements", should be established in every locality, factory, office, society or club, to take over all administrative and executive power and dismiss reactionaries. It was the first time the Czechoslovak public had heard of those bodies, which were unparalleled in the history of the State and had no constitutional or legal foundation whatsoever—but were organised on similar lines to the "Soviets" who took over executive power in Russia during the Bolshevik revolution in 1917.



Czechoslovakia an operational basis for foreign agents and enemy of the U.S.S.R.

Mr. Gottwald also stated that the crisis could be overcome only if the resignations were accepted and the Ministers concerned were replaced by convinced democrats from all parties and from nation-wide organisations, who had earned the confidence of the whole nation.

"Be on your guard," said Mr. Gottwald, "in preventing any provocation against us, which must be rooted out from the beginning. The will of the Czechoslovak people will be carried out. **OUR TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL!**"

During his speech the Premier had paused after mentioning the *Free Word*, and the group of henchmen standing under the balcony from which the speakers conducted the meeting began to shout: "Put an end to it, put an end to it . . ." until the demand was taken up by the crowd, responding to mass instinct. The cries were amplified into a roar by the open-air loudspeakers all over the city, which in those few days were working at full pressure, giving the impression that an avalanche was about to descend on the heads of the listeners. People sat in the trams and walked about the streets with set faces, without talking to each other, forced to listen to the tumult whether they wanted to or not.

Before the meeting ended a further appeal was made for the establishment "in all regions, districts and villages, in all factories, societies and offices, Action Committees of the New National Front, consisting of reliable democratic elements who would purge from their places of activity all traitors and reactionaries!"

The last words of the resolution, which had evidently been prepared before the meeting even began, and contained all the points made by Gottwald, ran like this:

"Long live the National Front headed by Klement Gottwald without reactionary Ministers! Long live the firm unity of our people! Long live the real National Front of all working sections of the nation! Long live our popular democratic Republic! Long live the strong and eternal alliance of Czechoslovakia with the Soviet Union and other Slav countries!" There was no word of President Beneš.

As soon as the meeting was over Mr. Gottwald left for the Castle to contact the President and to inform him about the "spontaneous will of the masses" that the resignations be accepted and the Government reformed. The President had already received the Chairman of the Social Democrat Party, Mr. Laušman, the Vice-Prime Minister, Mr. Tymeš, and the Secretary General of the Party, Mr. Vilim.

In the meantime my circular telegram to our Embassies was transmitted in its original form, since Mr. Masaryk had in turn

scored out the cancellations of Mr. Klinger. My next step was to call at the Presidential Office in the Castle of Prague, only half a mile from the Czernin Palais. I had arranged in January with the President's Chancellor, Ambassador Smutny, to get President Beneš's direct message for the diplomatic corps, should there be a need for it in case of emergency. I was told that nothing was yet ready, but it was possible there might be something later on.

Back in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I took steps to see that an extraordinary circular telegram transmission for legations was arranged for the afternoon. Just on that crucial Saturday I was duty officer in the afternoon and this gave me a unique opportunity to avoid Mr. Klinger's censorship. I sent out a short message: "Stand by at 3.00 p.m. CET for another transmission", which would be picked up by our radio operators the world over. We knew that our circular telegrams, transmitted in Morse but not otherwise coded (to cut down the time necessary for coding and decoding), were also picked up by the big news agencies and were used as inside information. That suited my purpose very well.

While waiting for the message to come through from the President's office, I received several reports on different incidents. For instance, the Social Democratic Minister of Food, Václav Majer, had been declined permission to make a broadcast in which he intended to explain his Party's attitude towards the present crisis. The Social Democratic Party announced that Mrs. Petrankova and Dr. Němec, who had spoken at the meeting that morning, had done so without the consent of their Party and would therefore be expelled. In its turn the Communist Party accused the Social Democrats of attempting to join forces with the Czech Socialist Party—to isolate the Communists. (This announcement was a little hasty, since later on the Communist Party itself approached the Social Democrats and offered to form the new Government in close co-operation with them.)

By now it was nearly 12.30 p.m. and I still had no message from the Presidential Office for transmission at 3 p.m. When I phoned to inquire I was told no special message would be sent, but that the President had just received a delegation of workers who had attended the morning meeting and his statement to them was being typed at once. I was given the first part of it right away on the telephone and the rest at ten-minute intervals, dictating it and passing it on to the radio operator as it came through. By four o'clock the report was on the air. It read (in an abbreviated form):

"CIRCULAR TELEGRAM TO LONDON PARIS MOSCOW WASHINGTON  
BERNE WARSAW BUDAPEST BELGRADE SOFIA FRANKFURT HAMBURG

BADEN-BADEN ANKARA TEHRAN NO 47. SEND BY AIR ALL EMBASSIES ACCORDING SCHEME PRESIDENT BENES RECEIVED DELEGATION OF WORKERS WHO ATTENDED MASS MEETING THIS MORNING ADDRESSED BY PREMIER GOTTWALD SPEAKERS DEMANDED THAT RESIGNATIONS BE ACCEPTED AND GOTTWALD GOVT COMPLETED BY RELIABLE REPRESENTATIVES WHOSE NATIONAL ORGANISATIONS BUT THOSE WHO RESIGNED MUST BE EXCLUDED BENES ANSWERED

"I ALSO WISH TO ANSWER FRANKLY YOUR FRANK SPEECH AS SOON AS THE CRISIS AROSE IT WAS RUMOURED WE WOULD HAVE A GOVERNMENT OF BUREAUCRATS AFTER GOTTWALD TOLD ME OF THIS I DECLARED CATEGORICALLY, "NO BUREAUCRATIC GOVERNMENT CAN EXIST AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED BECAUSE WE HAVE A PARLIAMENT AND SHALL THEREFORE HAVE A PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT". TELL THIS TO YOUR FRIENDS LATER I WAS TOLD BY GOTTWALD THAT ATTEMPTS WERE BEING MADE TO FORCE COMMUNISTS TO RESIGN FROM THE GOVERNMENT SUCH AN ATTEMPT WOULD NOT BE TOLERATED BY ME I TOLD GOTTWALD THAT NEITHER WOULD I ACCEPT HIS RESIGNATION I SAID "YOU ARE THE PRIME MINISTER AND I WANT TO KNOW YOUR POINT OF VIEW WITHOUT HEARING YOU I SHALL DO NOTHING OF COURSE I CAN ALSO HAVE MY OWN OPINION I AM SPEAKING WITHOUT RESERVE THERE CAN BE NO GOVERNMENT FOR ME IN WHICH THE COMMUNISTS ARE NOT REPRESENTED BECAUSE THE LARGEST PARTY CANNOT BE EXCLUDED FROM THE GOVERNMENT FURTHERMORE THE FUTURE GOVERNMENT WILL BE LED BY GOTTWALD SINCE IT IS CLEAR TO ME THAT IT MUST BE LED BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE STRONGEST PARTY, BUT IF YOU SUGGEST THAT SOMEONE ELSE SHOULD BE EXCLUDED THAT IS ALSO GOING TOO FAR. I HAVE NOT YET SPOKEN TO MINISTERS WHO RESIGNED THEY CERTAINLY HAVE THEIR OWN REASONS AND I CANNOT MAKE MY JUDGMENT UNTIL I HAVE HEARD THEM AS PRESIDENT IT IS MY DUTY TO URGE PEOPLE AND PARTIES TO CO OPERATE SHOULD I ACT ACCORDING TO YOUR DEMANDS I WOULD INTERFERE WITH AFFAIRS WHICH ARE A MATTER FOR DECISION BY POLITICAL PARTIES AND NOT BY THE PRESIDENT WHO IS NOMINATED AFTER PROPOSAL BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF HIS PARTY IS FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO DECIDE DIFFERENCES IN THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE SETTLED BUT NOT BY SEPARATION OF PERSONS FROM THEIR WORK I REPEAT, THE WHOLE PROBLEM MUST BE CONSIDERED WITH IMPARTIAL OBJECTIVITY AND MY DUTY IS TO BRING PARTIES TOGETHER, NOT TO SPLIT THEM AGAINST EACH OTHER. NEITHER NOW NOR LATER SHALL I ACCEPT ANY SOLUTION EXCLUDING ANYONE, THE COMMUNISTS, TOO PLEASE BEAR THIS IN MIND, REMEMBER ALL THE DIFFICULTIES WE HAVE TO OVERCOME AND TRY TO HELP ME TO DEAL WITH THEM"

"THE DELEGATES ASSURED THE PRESIDENT HE HAD THE CONFIDENCE OF THE WORKING PEOPLE AND EXPRESSED THEIR DESIRE FOR PEACEFUL WORK"

Dr. Beneš's viewpoint had been made clear. There could be only a parliamentary Government in which all parties would be represented by persons agreed upon by the Party Executives and the Prime Minister, strictly according to the rules of parliamentary democracy and constitution. This resolute declaration from the President gave new hope, and I was glad I had the chance of transmitting it abroad, as there was some likelihood that it might be considerably shortened before it was released for the press, or even suppressed altogether.

The telephone rang within a few minutes. It was Mr. Klinger asking innocently whether there was any news—and what I was doing.

"I have transmitted the President's statement," I answered. I realised that in any case the Communist listening service in the radio building must have already notified him about it.

"Who on earth gave you permission to do that," snapped Klinger angrily. "Didn't I tell you that nothing whatsoever was to be transmitted unless it came from the C.T.K. agency?"

"Of course you did, but I understand the President's statement will be given to C.T.K. and automatically released for the Sunday press."

"Who signed the telegram?"

"I did."

"On whose instructions?"

"Mr. Masaryk's. I presume there is no objection—or is there?" Klinger rang off and I was left with the necessity of getting Minister Masaryk's signature. The transmission had, I hoped, done some harm to future Communist plans, as it left our diplomatic corps in no doubt where the President stood. Had I but known, it was the last free broadcast we were to make.

Before I left the office several more reports came in which were significant of the direction in which the crisis was developing. All the planes of the Czechoslovak Air Force had been grounded and no airman who had served in the R.A.F. was allowed to enter the hangars. Radio Brno, in the Moravian capital, had transmitted an appeal by Police Colonel Kuttner, who declared at a public meeting:

"We shall crush the disrupters and saboteurs. We used to be reproached with 'gestapism'. Yes, comrades, there will be gestapism, and it will affect the people who used to accuse us of it! Comrades, if need be, the noise of battle will be heard, and the blood of our enemies will run. Last night we took our stand when all members of the Security Corps signed a pledge on their honour and conscience to be loyal to the Government of Klement Gottwald and to obey the orders of the Minister of the Interior, Václav Nosek!"

As far as the police were concerned the last word had been said. A report I read later, from the Soviet Agency Tass, read:

"The governmental crisis in Prague is connected with the return of Ambassador Steinhardt from U.S.A. Before leaving, Steinhardt said to the press that the Czechoslovak elections would be carried out without Communist violence. That was a signal for the Czechoslovak reaction to start the governmental crisis. The Czech opposition hopes to bring about the downfall of the Communist leadership and has begun by attacking the police."

*Sunday, 22nd February.*

The night had passed without any untoward events, though there was much political activity. We learned that Mr. Zorin had held a long private discussion with Messrs. Gottwald, Zápotocký, Kopecký, Nosek and Slánský, while Mr. Smrkovsky and Major Schram stood by, ready to give any information required on the party's armed support, of which they were in charge. Mr. Zorin also conferred with Mr. Fierlinger and with colleagues from the Soviet Embassy.

Delegates to the Factory Councils' Congress, organised by the Trade Unions, had been arriving in Prague since the previous afternoon, and the police completed their measures for putting all central Prague and strategic points and buildings in the suburbs under armed surveillance. In the big factories Communists took over the lorries and were apparently busy providing transport for the delegates to the Congress. More often they were taking members of the factory militia, armed with new pistols and rifles, to their action stations.

President Beneš had left the Castle of Prague the day before (Saturday) and spent the night in Lány Castle some twenty miles from the capital. There he received a letter addressed to him from the Presidium of the Communist Party, supporting the claims he had discussed with Mr. Gottwald and rejected only twenty-four hours before. The letter repeated a number of times that there could be no negotiations with the Ministers who had resigned. It summed up:

"We should like to bring to your attention, Mr. President, our view that acceptance of the resignations is the only democratic, constitutional, and parliamentary solution of the present governmental crisis.

"We do not wish to leave you in any doubt, Mr. President, as to the attitude taken towards this question by our party: we consider ourselves bound by the will of the people, and it is the resolved will of the people of this country that the Ministers who

banded in their resignations recently remain outside the Government of the State, as they have, by reason of their irresponsible action, sinned unforgivably against the fundamental principles of the National Front and against the spirit of governmental co-operation."

The letter further suggested that it was the duty of the Prime Minister to replace those Ministers without delay and eventually enter into negotiations with individual political personalities as well as representatives of certain nation-wide organisations. The letter ended with the words:

"We therefore request you, Mr. President, to identify yourself with this, our opinion. We are convinced that our view is that of the Czech and Slovak people. Allow us to assure you that the meetings of workers taking place throughout the Republic are giving expression to their tense expectation as to whether you, Mr. President, in this fateful time, will make your decision in accordance with the will of the people, and will thus contribute to the further progress and evolution of our People's Democracy."

The letter was signed by Gottwald and Slánský and was followed up by a great number of telegrams to the President, all demanding in almost uniform text that the claims expressed by Mr. Gottwald at the Saturday meeting should be met. It was a well-organised action, perhaps too well organised to be convincing.

Back in the capital the Congress of Factory Councils had already begun. Its main feature was that, in the presence of some 8,000 carefully chosen (not elected) members of U.R.O., the questions concerning the Trade Unions for which the Congress had been specifically called were put on one side, and the assembly was confronted with Communist political claims which were automatically voted on and adopted. The assembly, moreover, was suddenly named as the "largest and most powerful workers' parliament in the country".

Premier Gottwald, addressing the meeting, began by describing the present internal crisis and demanding expression of disagreement with the steps taken by the non-Communist parties. He said that the "bright prospects of the Czech and Slovak people were, however, bleak prospects for reactionaries, for the remains of the capitalist and agrarian classes, black marketeers and collaborators, who found their spokesmen in certain political parties". Mr. Gottwald accused those parties of trying to "break up the unity of the Czechoslovak people and sow dissension between the factory-workers and peasants on the one hand, and the other section of society on the other hand". He added:

"Finally they provoked the crisis by their resignations. This step of theirs is therefore nothing other than a general attempt to reinstate capitalism and pre-Munich conditions, to set up an anti-working-class Government and to demolish the achievements of our revolution and post-war reconstruction. This in fact would mean returning the nationalised factories again to the capitalists, taking the land from its new owners, who received it after the war, and re-introducing a regime of unemployment, hunger and truncheon charges."

"Our domestic reaction will stop at nothing," was the opinion of the Communist leader. "To gain the help of foreign reaction, it is even ready to throw over agreements with the Soviet Union and the Slav nations, to endure German imperialism for the second time, and to suffer a new Munich in the name of class interest!"

"I believe I can say with truth that our working class and all our people are ready to repel the attacks and intrigues of reactionary elements by all means in their power." It was the same old refrain, ending with the flourishing of the aggressively determined demands for the solution of the crisis. They were as follows:

- (1) The resignations of the twelve Ministers must be accepted.
- (2) The Government should be completed with new, loyal representatives of the people and their organisations.
- (3) The New Constitution, as suggested by the Communist Party, was to be adopted without delay.
- (4) The new National Insurance scheme was to be carried out immediately.
- (5) The new land reform was to be enforced.
- (6) Reduction of taxation for peasants and small traders was to be planned.

There Mr. Gottwald paused, and, putting stress on every word, said:

"There is only one—and I repeat and underline it three times—only one way to avert the chaos our reactionaries wish to bring about. There is only one way of ensuring that we go forward again. This is the way of the Communists, who thereby interpret the will of the working people!"

As Mr. Gottwald did not address the Congress in a private capacity, the question arose in what capacity he spoke. If as the Chairman of the Communist Party, then he represented only 38 per cent of the total vote, which his party had gained in the last elections. If he spoke as Prime Minister, then he also spoke in the name of the 62 per cent who cast non-Communist votes, and also in the name of the twelve Ministers whose resignations had not yet been accepted by the President and who therefore were still in office. What is more, this majority, 62 per cent of the Czech

throughout the country for 24th February. Public and private road transport was to stop for five minutes. Instructions that Action Committees should be set up in all parts of the country were repeated. The proclamation ended: "On the basis of these demands we are mobilising all members of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement, no matter whether they are employers, workers or civil servants."

The Congress then voted on the resolutions, and the number of votes was recorded as 7,990 against 10. I spoke to one delegate who voted with the noes, and he told me that only among the people immediately surrounding him he counted at least fifteen hands expressing disapproval. . . .

In bidding the Congress farewell, Mr. Zápotocký introduced a note of warning: "We have already had cases where employees have gone against our decisions. We have looked upon such conduct with quiet forbearance and contented ourselves with reproving those guilty of it and persuading them of their mistakes. But when we have once declared a state of mobilisation, anyone who doesn't want to go with us can get to one side. . . .

"Our building concerns and mines need manpower," he said significantly, "we shall give such people every chance of making a free, honest living! . . .

"Long live the socialising People's Democracy! Long live our alliance with the Slav nations and with our liberator, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics!" the adopted Resolution ended.

The other notable event that day was the celebration of Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship, marking at the same time the thirtieth anniversary of the foundation of the Red Army. In the presence of the Speaker of the House, Mr. David, representing the President of the Republic, and of Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Zorin, on behalf of the Soviet Government, and many other noted guests, speeches were made against the beautiful background of the Prague National Opera House. Dr. Beneš sent a message in which he underlined that it had been his foremost task, long before the Second World War, to draw Soviet Russia into peaceful co-operation with other nations, and how happy he was in his success in achieving it. He said, too, that unshakable friendship between Soviet Russia and Czechoslovakia was the best guarantee of Czechoslovakia's independence. Mr. David repeated what had been said several times before by non-Communist leaders, that friendship between the two countries was not a matter for one party only but of the whole Czechoslovak people. The Minister of National Defence, General Svoboda, declared that if Czechoslovakia was to remain an independent State it must remain in the camp of progress and democracy under the shield of the Soviet Union and its Army.



Most of the addresses were on the line the Czech people had been used to hearing ever since the liberation in 1945. All were calculated to appease a great neighbour for whom not even the strongest assurances were strong enough. Mr. Gottwald, who also spoke, expressed perhaps best of all the threat to the nation if the Communist demands were not docilely accepted. Mr. Zorin, who had sat in his box until now without any sign of emotion or interest, showed some degree of satisfaction for the first time.

Behind the scenes the crusade continued without interruption. The police were already making many arrests, taking into custody most of the prominent personalities who had directed the investigation of last year's bomb plot, while those who were facing trial, notably Jura Sosnar, the Communist M.P., and his accomplices from the same party, were shown the way out of the prison cells. Among the first arrested were the State Prosecutors, Dr. Marianko and Dr. Dolezal, of the Ministry of Justice.

In Slovakia the Communist Chairman of the Slovak National Council, Dr. Husak, demanded the resignation of the representatives of the Slovak Democratic Party, and their remaining six members on the Slovak Board of Commissioners were to be replaced. When this was brought to the notice of the Prime Minister, he approved of it. At a public meeting Dr. Husak declared that Czechoslovakia was no longer a Citizens' Republic but a People's Republic—and ended his speech with a vindictive attack on the Slovak Democratic Party, which he accused of having caused a dangerous political crisis twice within a short time.

The searches undertaken in the editorial offices of the *Free Word* in Prague, and in the regional offices of the Czech Socialist Party, were a warning of what was to come. The management of the *Free Word* was also notified that it could no longer depend on paper supply as the nationalised paper mills had refused to deliver paper to opposition newspapers.

While the Czechoslovak radio was filling the ether with Communist propaganda, from orders to Action Committees to commentaries and publicity on the Factory Councils Congress, the B.B.C., as during the war, became the sole source of reliable information for the Czechoslovak people. The reports of Patrick Smith, the B.B.C. correspondent in Prague, were followed with almost religious fervour, however grave they might be.

*Monday, 23rd February.*

Alarming reports flooded in. The first Action Committees were already installed in factories and offices, where they had taken over all administrative power, dismissing managers or owners, and in government offices, even prohibiting Ministers,

such as Mr. Pietor, the Minister of Transport, Msgr. Hála (Posts), Dr. Drtina (Justice) or Dr. Stránský (Education), from continuing their work, in spite of the fact that as their resignations had not yet been accepted they were still in office. Those members of the Ministries concerned who were Communists, either declared or undeclared, had formed an excellent fifth column.

The police, who were already acting in close co-operation with the Russian N.K.V.D. (Secret Police), entered the Central Secretariat of the Czech Socialist Party after 10 a.m. and searched the whole building, leaving no desk or file untouched. The search was still going on when at eleven o'clock the Minister of the Interior went to see the President to submit a report to him stating that important evidence had been discovered of preparation by the party for an armed uprising, and that it had contacts with foreign powers. The ransacking of the offices lasted almost until one o'clock, and up to that time no papers had even been removed from the premises, let alone studied to such an extent that a report could be made on them. Minister Nosek was joined at the Castle by Mr. Gottwald at midday, and when they left Mr. Gottwald claimed that "negotiations with Beneš are nearing an end".

"A list of members of the new Government," he said, "will be accepted in a matter of days, if not hours. None of those who resigned will remain—we do not intend to negotiate with them at all. My viewpoint and that of President Beneš are now much closer."

As no newspapers were ever published in Bohemia on Mondays, the public was entirely dependent on information from *Rude Pravo*, which to-day broke the regulation of not publishing, and transmitted by the radio, which continued in its attacks on those who had offered their resignations and repeated again and again the Communist Party instructions to Action Committees. The only balanced announcement was a statement issued from the Presidential Office asking everyone to remain calm and patient. It was notified that the President would address the nation shortly to answer the countless messages he had received. In the meantime everyone should rest assured that the President would be guided in his decisions only by the rules of parliamentary democracy and that he would do everything in his power to bring about an agreement between all the parties represented in the National Front.

Several foreign newspapers tried to get their information directly from the Presidential Office. These calls were automatically switched over to the Prime Minister's Office where Dr. Vladimír Bernasek, the Chief of the Political Section, was dealing

with them. What kind of information this gentleman was issuing can be discovered from part of the conversation published in the *Daily Graphic* on 23rd February.

When asked about the situation in Prague, Dr. Bernasek answered:

"Everything is calm—we have discovered a plot by the Socialist Party against the security of the State. This must be stamped out. . . ." Another question was:

"If everything is calm, why did Beneš ask for calm?"

"Because the Socialists tried to get control of the radio building. That cannot be tolerated."

"What about the Soviet hand in the affair?"

"Nonsense, it is a lie. We are free and independent to act as we want. We want to preserve our national independence like other Slav countries."

"Yes, like Poland!"

"Why can't we talk to Beneš?"

"He is too busy, as usual!"

When I read this story I thought how amused Dr. Bernasek must have been—that just he (perhaps the most insincere man I have ever met) should be answering those calls. He had served with me in the Second Battalion in Britain, but only after 1941, because as an obedient member of the Communist Party he looked on it as an "imperialist-plutocratic struggle" until Russia joined in, and accordingly refused to take any part in it. His son, Vladimir Bernasek, Jr., had been expelled from the Czech Grammar School in Britain for active Communist propaganda among his younger schoolmates. In Prague he joined the editorial of *Mlada Fronta* ("Young Front"), the "non-party" daily of the Czechoslovak Youth Movement.

That afternoon the President received the Ministers, of all three parties, who had resigned. It was the first time since tendering their resignations that they had been able to contact the President personally. He was in agreement with their stand, in the knowledge that the crisis had been bound to come sooner or later.

Msgr. Šrámek, the seventy-eight-year-old leader of the Catholic Party, war-time Prime Minister, and present Vice-Prime Minister, was not the type of politician who decided according to a sudden impulse how to act on major issues. But once he had decided, nothing could change his mind. Now, with his colleagues before the President, he said:

"We, Mr. President, are prepared to stand any pressure exerted by the Communists, but it is also for you to endure to the end, and so defend the only just and democratic attitude, that of the non-Communist parties."

Dr. Beneš did not appear to be hurt by this frank speech, and replied:

"If you do not slip, I shall not. Without an agreement between the Chairmen of all parties, the new Government will not be nominated!"

Later in the evening at about 10 p.m. Dr. Beneš also received the Ministers of the Social Democratic Party. Their Ministers, who had put their mandates at the disposal of the Party Executive, had not yet resigned. They had been in session all day long, and had dealt in a stormy meeting with a letter they had received from the Communist Party Executive suggesting that the new Government should be based on the Czech and Slovak Communist Parties and the Social Democratic Party only. The letter concluded: "The Communist Party expresses its profound conviction that the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party cannot possibly make common cause with the irresponsible representatives of the three political parties whose activities are destined to destroy the Czechoslovak Republic."

Mr. Fierlinger suggested the offer should be accepted. Mr. Majer was bitterly opposed to it, but Mr. Laušman began to waver. Majer, when the argument reached its peak, cried: "I have always known you were a bad comrade, but now I know you are also a bad patriot!" Fierlinger, who was pale and angry, retorted: "I never thought of you as a comrade at all!" Finally Mr. Laušman gave way and it was decided that direct negotiation with the Communist Party should be undertaken.

While this memorable meeting was taking place behind the walls of the party headquarters, in the streets outside the special edition of the Communist newspaper *Rude Pravo*, was being distributed free. It consisted mainly of reprints of articles from the Soviet *Pravda*. This in itself was further proof, if it were needed, that the Communist Party had taken the law into its own hands, since it was illegal to produce editions of newspapers on Mondays (to safeguard Sunday as a rest-day for journalists and to save paper). The comments and criticisms quoted from *Pravda* were identical with the line adopted throughout the crisis by the Czech and Slovak Communist Parties. Here are some typical extracts taken from *Pravda* and used by *Rude Pravo*.

"On the eve of the parliamentary elections in Czechoslovakia, international reaction has considerably strengthened its intrigues against democracy. The instruments of reaction are elements which have penetrated into certain parties in the Government coalition . . . these have provided a refuge for persons who keep their real anti-national convictions concealed. . . . The Gottwald Government is carrying on an energetic struggle against the intrigues of foreign reaction, unearthing terrorists



THE QUEEN WITH DR. BENES AT THE CZECHOSLOVAK INSTITUTE, LONDON



JAN MASARYK AND ANDREI GROMYKO AT THE UNITED NATIONS ASSEMBLY IN NEW YORK, 1947

and rendering spies harmless. . . . With their help" (the reactionary Ministers') "international reaction is attempting to bring about a split in the people's democratic order. These efforts, however, will end without any success. There cannot and must not be any compromises where policy against the people is concerned."

*Izvestia* did not hesitate to state that the strength of the 200,000,000 Soviet people was supporting the heroic fight of the Czechoslovak Communist Party for freedom and liberty.

It was hardly necessary to explain to the public where the Communist Party had found their source of courage for this major action. Mr. Zorin's presence and the newspaper reports were enough to convince them. Occasional shouts in the streets from their party members reminded me again of the slogan the Germans used in 1939 when they greeted each other with the words "Es kommt der Tag!" ("the day will come!").

The radio and street loud-speakers were announcing on that Monday: "Be ready, stay in your own districts—you will be needed, comrades. Obey the orders issued to you." A special announcement was made on behalf of U.R.O.: "All members of U.R.O., all employees wherever they may be, must strike tomorrow. Strike-breaking will not be tolerated!" The encouraging articles from the Soviet Press were repeatedly quoted to make quite sure to the man in the street that the Communist Party had full Soviet support.

Later in the evening a huge crowd gathered before the Secretariat of the Czech Socialist Party. The building was still occupied by the police, but people were not prevented from entering it. I arrived there with a colleague from the office, just as the Ministers, Zénkl, Růpka, Stránský and Drtina, returned from their consultation with Dr. Beneš. They were acclaimed by the people, who cried: "Down with the Communist terror!" A few hundred yards away a meeting of Socialist students was addressed by Dr. Krajina, and Mr. Lesak, an M.P. The students decided to go to the Castle and tell the President that the youth of the country was behind him. Led by Mr. Lesak, they marched through Prague, their numbers increasing, and when they reached historic Hradčany there were at least 10,000 following. The President received a delegation of five, led by Mr. Lesak, and thanked them for their gesture. He told them:

"We must reach co-operation between all parties, whatever happens. My aim is to preserve parliamentary democracy in the spirit of Masaryk, and I beg you to tell your friends that accord must and will be reached."

*Tuesday, 24th February.*

The creation of the Central Action Committee was announced on this day. It was referred to as the new political co-ordinating body of all progressive Czechs, and took over practically all executive power. The meeting of the National Assembly which should have taken place was postponed. The Chairman of the Committee was Mr. Zápotocký and the Secretary General, Dr. Alexej Čepička, the Minister of Internal Trade. At the first meeting representatives of the Social Democratic Party were present, as well as others who had ignored the ruling of the Catholic and Socialist Parties that the Action Committees were constitutionally illegal, and had therefore been automatically expelled from membership of these parties when they supported the Communists in setting up the Committees. The foremost of these who had betrayed their party allegiance were Father Plojhar, and the Vice-Chairman of the National Assembly, Mr. Petr.

The Minister of the Interior ordered the local governmental bodies to hand over their executive power to the new Action Committees. All over the country factories with over fifty employees were taken over by the local branches of the Trade Unions. The *coup d'état* was proceeding exactly to plan. The Minister of National Defence, General Svoboda, his Chief of Staff, General Božek,<sup>1</sup> and his deputy, General Klapalek, attended the meeting of the Central Action Committee.

The Trade Unions were pressing for a quick decision. During the one-hour strike, between twelve and one o'clock, it was declared that if the demands of the Prime Minister were not satisfied within the shortest possible time a General Strike would be proclaimed.

The token strike was also held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the direction of the newly-formed Action Committee. Some 650 officials were assembled in the large reception hall and every one of us had to sign an attendance list on entry. At the beginning of the meeting Minister Masaryk arrived, accompanied by the Under-Secretary, Dr. Clementis. Masaryk was holding a handkerchief to his mouth, and looked ill and worried. He said in a low voice:

"I have just left my bed to greet you all. I have nothing else to say but to ask for calm decisions, which must be taken with understanding for the different point of view of your friends. I hope that the meeting will be a dignified one. God bless you!" There was rousing applause as he left, but I noticed a silent group of employees in the front who remained impassive.

Two of our colleagues who had been unlucky enough to be

<sup>1</sup>Later General Božek fell into disgrace and had to retire.



chosen as delegates to the Sunday Factory Councils Congress gave sober reports of the decisions taken there, and a Catholic Party member, Dr. Plachy, was instructed to read the resolutions of the Foreign Ministry Action Committee, which he did with trembling voice and hands. He was plainly not happy in his task. The Committee itself was headed by the Chief of the Political Section, Dr. Borek. Another member of it was Dr. Chyle, who was the next to speak. In aggressive, snapping tones he demanded the immediate release of three officials from their duties, on the grounds that they were reactionaries. They were Dr. Garaj, the man who had defended democratic rights on the Employees Council against Dr. Chyle some weeks before on the question of Civil Service pay, then Dr. Chyle's former chief, under whom he had worked on the Embassy staff in the U.S.A., and Mr. Paleček, the war-time President of the World Union of Democratic Youth. To this he added the demand for the immediate recall of our Ministers in Berne, Mexico and The Hague. The last was the war-time Minister of Defence in the London Government, General Ingr, whose sons also served in the Western Army. Dr. Chyle commented that more names were to follow.

When I thought that at that time thousands of similar meetings were being held all over Czechoslovakia, bringing misery to countless people, I felt very depressed, and ashamed that such a thing was possible.

After Dr. Chyle had finished there was quiet except for a thin noise of clapping from the group in front. In the middle of the hall a hand went up. Its owner knew just how to express what most of us were feeling. He stood up and said:

"I have heard many names mentioned at this meeting, but I still miss that of President Beneš!"

There was terrific applause. Cries of "Long live Beneš!" lasted for several minutes. None was in doubt what his fellows had in mind, or where they stood; but that could not change matters.

The Secretariat of the Social Democratic Party was now to take its turn of invasion by armed militia, who interrupted a meeting of the Executive Committee. The Secretary General, Mr. Vilim, Mr. Majer and his supporters (Majer had been asked to resign by Gottwald, but had refused), and even the aged brother of the President, Mr. Vojta Beneš, were shouted down and assaulted by Fierlinger and his supporters, who installed themselves in office after making their opponents leave the building. Fierlinger had taken full revenge for his defeat at the Party Congress at Brno in November.

The Ministry of Information issued instructions to the press that any attacks or even criticism of Soviet Russia, the police, the Trade Unions, or nationalisation, would be considered as

sedition, and those making them would be prosecuted accordingly. Action Committees took over the publishing houses of the Socialist and Catholic Parties and the treacherous Father Plojhar, who had already been issued with full powers by the Ministry of the Interior, managed to secure newsprint for the Catholic paper *Lidova Demokracie* (People's Democracy) now under his control in the form of a loan from *Rude Pravo* (Red Right), that is from the Communist Printing House.

This happened while Father Plojhar's own Party Executive was in session drafting a letter to the President suggesting immediate elections, to show by secret vote the real will of the people. The message arrived during a conference the President was holding with the representatives of the Slovak Democratic Party led by Dr. Lettrich, the Chairman of the Slovak National Council. The President was being told that the situation in Slovakia was similar to that in the western provinces. The Communist Action Committees had taken over all power and they considered the majority party of Slovakia as non-existent. Reports also reached Prague that considerable Red Army movements had been observed in Austria and Saxony, both in the direction of the Czechoslovak border. They were described by the Soviet authorities as routine manoeuvres.

There was one bright spot in this overcast atmosphere. The students issued an appeal for the support of President Masaryk's heritage. It said that every student must defend democracy and freedom, thus expressing the spirit and tradition of 17th October 1939, the day of the massacre of Czech students by the Nazis, for their opposition to the dictatorial regime. "Defence also means readiness to fight," said the proclamation, "even if we know that the result will be the same as in 1939!" It took them only twenty-four hours to call some 25,000 students together, and together they marched towards the Castle of Prague, to show their loyalty to the President.

Albion Ross, the correspondent of the *New York Times*, reported an incident he had witnessed that night on Wenceslaus Square, where the central building of the Socialist daily, *Free Word*, was brightly illustrated in neon lights, with the name of the paper almost at the roof level. When the paper was seized by the Action Committee the light was extinguished. Over the street special Communist-installed loudspeakers were announcing events. The speaker said "Colleagues of the *Free Word*, your light has gone out for ever!"

*Wednesday, 25th February.*

The *Free Word* did not appear. The workers in the North Bohemian paper mills apparently had carried out their threat of

stopping supplies of newsprint to the reactionary press; but the Catholic organ, *Lidova Demokracie*, and the organ of the Czechoslovak cultural institutions, *Svobodné Noviny*, produced their first editions under the new Communist management. The non-Communist parties were now completely without means of contacting their membership.

One article appeared in the two papers I have just mentioned which could not be refuted or suppressed. It was written by the Archbishop of Prague, Dr. Karel Beran, who had been a prisoner during the war in Dachau. He wrote:

"I have received an anonymous letter. All it says is, 'Do not remain silent, Archbishop. You must not be silent!'

"I have thought about it. Is it right not to be silent, but to speak? Jesus Christ said, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin' (St. John xv, 22).

"Perhaps it would be better to be silent and to leave them unaware. But St. Paul wrote, 'I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Preach the word; be instant in season . . . reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine' (2 Timothy iv, 12).

"Therefore I am not silent. The good Czech people know me. I have not betrayed, and I shall not betray, my people. I know how to suffer.

"Therefore I speak!

"(1) I swear to you by the dear blood shed by our brothers and sisters in concentration camps and prisons. For the sake of the tears and pain of Czech women and mothers, awake! I know that you do not want to provoke fratricidal combat, but this is not the way to avoid it. Think of your responsibility!

"(2) Maintain the law! All have agreed in principle with the programme of socialisation. All were working for its fulfilment, and are willing to go on doing so. On the basis of law you can achieve more lasting reforms, even the most radical ones. Read history and convince yourselves!

"(3) Do not destroy the heritage of the President Liberator and the work of the President Constructor! We ourselves have called them by these names. Their work is recognised by the whole nation. They have worked and suffered for you and your descendants. You have always had confidence in them. Ingratitude is painful, and ingratitude is punished by interdict!

"I wish everyone could see into my heart. I feel sincerely with everyone, with the whole nation. Will my words be understood with the same sincerity?

"I WISH TO HOPE IT MAY BE SO!"

That was the Archbishop's message, from the only sovereign besides President Beneš on Czech soil. Few dared to heed his words.

At that very moment another voice was heard. It was the voice of Radio Moscow:

"The chief lesson of the recent events in Czechoslovakia is, that when the people are united in the defence of their interests, reaction is powerless. The capitalist press in Western Europe and its Socialist henchmen have tried to make it appear that Czechoslovakia is heading for a Communist dictatorship, but these attempts are futile.

"It was the reactionary plotters who were ready to establish a dictatorship—and a Fascist dictatorship at that!"

This was a signal that the day of Mr. Gottwald had come. In the autumn, during the Slovak crisis, he was already tempted to strike, if only he could have been sure of the Kremlin's attitude. But now that Mr. Zorin was in Prague, and the Kremlin had made its views known, he had nothing more to fear. He had already secured the support of a handful of Quislings, or Pierlingers, in each party, and he had the Social Democratic promise of co-operation. He knew that the moment he had been working and waiting for had come. He drove to the Castle of Prague.

## Beneš's Dilemma

*"It should be stressed that in their actions against democracies the totalitarian regimes were always offensive and were consistent in their mutual support; the democratic regimes were not consistent in this respect and at critical moments in their difficult fight they deserted and betrayed each other."*

DR. EDUARD BENEŠ, *Democracy To-day and To-morrow*, 1939-40

FEBRUARY 25TH, the sixth day of the crisis, presented President Beneš with the most difficult decision he had faced since the time of the Munich crisis in 1938. Once again there was no doubt that democracy and the national independence and well-being were at stake. In 1938 the origin of the crisis, which was artificial and was fomented to a point where a foreign power played the decisive role, was the alien, volcanic German minority. It looked for its support and instructions to Berlin, the stronghold of Czechoslovakia's historic enemy. This time, exactly ten years later, the Communist minority, though of Czech and Slovak origin, was not less disrupting, and brought about a crisis planned well in advance under direction from Moscow, the capital of Czechoslovakia's "natural ally and Slav brother". On both occasions the weight of responsibility for the final decision rested on the shoulders of one man alone.

Since this parallel existed between the situation of 1948 and that of 1938, what were the obstacles that prevented a politician of Beneš's quality, authority and popularity from profiting by his previous experience and averting the new danger?

Oddly enough, the German problem, which many had considered as solved by the transfer of population as in 1938, again played an important part in the destruction of the State, and not without a certain responsibility for lack of effective action by the Western Allies. These had failed, probably because of their own difficulties in Germany, to make it quite clear that the transfer of the German or Nazi population was a definite and permanent solution of the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia. The signatories of the Potsdam Agreement knew it to be so, but the Western Allies, by not asserting it, left the door open to the Soviet bogey, "German danger and vengeance".

It would perhaps be possible for the Allied authorities in Germany to ascertain whether the so-called German outcry, "We shall come back and plaster the streets of Prague with Czech skulls", which was widely publicised in Czechoslovakia, did not originate in the Moscow propaganda factory. Beneš, it is true, agreed during the war to the solution of the minority problem, but by "carefully prepared and slowly effected transfer of the German and Hungarian minority, in connection with a possible exchange of population and with full observance of humanitarian methods"; but it was the Communist Party who insisted that the transfer be carried out as quickly as possible, with the full agreement and support of the Soviet Union. The transfer, part of which I witnessed, was conducted in a fair and orderly fashion, and could not be spoken of in the same breath with the cruel and abominable transport of Czechs and other nationals during the war by the Germans; it did, however, create a new body outside Czechoslovakia with a potentially menacing and hostile attitude to the country from which they had been expelled. By skilful propaganda the Communists now proceeded to make this "menace" a formidable pretext for the closest possible alliance with the Soviet security system. Soviet Russia was presented as the only power with means of averting the German danger, which she would do in her own interest as well as that of Czechoslovakia, and the Western Powers, on the other hand, were reported to be pouring food into Germany and making it possible for her to build up her industry. In the latter half of 1947 Dr. Beneš himself was placed in a position where he could only describe Czechoslovakia as "not between the West and the East but between Germany and Soviet Russia". This question of expelled Germans therefore had far-reaching results, particularly in its influence on Czechoslovak strategical policy and on the mental attitude of her people.

Leaving aside the German problem, in February 1948 the direct threat to democracy by the Communist minority was the major factor. There were no language difficulties, and no possibility of isolating the trouble geographically. The systematic penetration of national life in every branch of public, economic or cultural activities by the Communist element excluded any hope of mastering the minority by normal administrative and democratic measures.

If a State and its generally accepted governmental system are in jeopardy, the employment of the Army is among the constitutionally admissible measures of defence. In 1938 the Army was intact, reliable and ready to execute the orders of its Supreme Commander, the President of the Republic. That it was not used was mainly due to the existing attitude of the allies of Czecho-

slovakia towards a possible military conflict. The question then arises why Beneš did not appear to have made any attempt to enlist the help of the Army in 1948. In point of fact he did not overlook this factor.

On 23rd February the President was given the promise of General Svoboda, when he received him together with General Boček and General Klapalek in the presence of his military adviser, General Hasal, that he would carry out the President's orders should the police force make an armed attempt to seize power. Whatever General Svoboda's motive in giving his word on that occasion, his promise was followed at once by a large-scale purge of the higher-ranking Army officers, to which some twenty-five Generals, known for their loyalty to President Beneš, fell victim (I should perhaps mention the names of the two former Commanding Officers of the Western Brigade, General Miroslav and General Liska, and the former chief of Czechoslovakia's war-time Intelligence Service, General Moravec). So it was not difficult to judge what would have been the response to a request to throw the Army into action against the armed militia and the Communist-commanded police force. In any case, the strategical position of Czechoslovakia and the general international situation were not favourable to such a step.

To return to the comparison with the events of 1938, we reach this conclusion: ten years ago there had still been a fair chance that an armed conflict, provoked by the Czechoslovak Army's opposition to the German occupation of the border territories, might have moved Czechoslovakia's allies, France and Britain, and probably even Rumania (who in fact was already in the first stages of mobilisation) to come to her aid. Germany herself was not prepared as early as that to risk a war,<sup>1</sup> which was also true, of course, in May 1938 when Czechoslovakia mobilised and stopped the first German menace.

In February 1948 the strategic situation showed a completely unbalanced distribution of armed force. The Russians, standing along nine-tenths of the entire length of Czechoslovakia's frontiers, were more prepared to wage a Continental war, should it be necessary, than the Western Allies. The balance of power, due to the incorporation of Czechoslovakia into their sphere of "liberation", was already in their favour, and they could not have tolerated any change in this status quo, unless it were in their favour. In 1938 Czechoslovakia had modern equipment for at least forty-five divisions. In 1948 only obsolete German material was

<sup>1</sup>When I accompanied Colonel Ečer, Chief of the Czechoslovak War Crimes Investigation Branch, to his preliminary interrogation of Keitel, Goering and Daluege at Mondorf, Luxembourg, in September 1945, Keitel admitted that Germany could not have afforded to lose half a million men penetrating the well-consolidated frontier defences of Bohemia.

at hand. Therefore an attempt to crush a Communist- or Moscow-sponsored attempt to seize complete power in Czechoslovakia, especially in view of the effect it would have had on the surrounding countries, which had already been subdued, as well as in Finland, Italy, and elsewhere, would for the Soviets have been insupportable. As in the event of Soviet armed intervention there was then no chance of effective resistance by the poorly-equipped Army, the help of the Western Powers was not only unlikely but almost impossible. Such a clash, moreover, would have inevitably led to World War III, which the Great Powers would not have been induced to wage this time any more than last time solely on account of Czechoslovakia. The February crisis did not directly affect the general march of world policy, and the country's earlier incorporation into the Soviet potential defence system deprived her of her strategic value to the Western Allies in the initial phases of a possible conflict.

If we take into consideration this general military situation, we ought to recapitulate, too, the weapons which were in the hands of the Communist Party when this final bid for dictatorship was made on the 24th and 25th of February. These were:

(a) Official backing by the Soviet Communist Party (i.e. by the Soviet Union) as expressed by the Soviet radio and press, as well as by the presence and political activity of the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, V. A. Zorin, in Prague (he even made an attempt to see Dr. Beneš, but was not received. It is known, however, that he had a long telephone conversation with him).

(b) Absolute control of all internal security forces supported by the Soviet N.K.V.D. (Soviet Secret Police) who were working in close co-operation with the Czechoslovak State and Army Intelligence Service, commanded by the Moscow-trained Colonel Rejcin.

(c) Complete subordination of all means of communication and publicity (in the radio "unreliable" officials had been forbidden to enter the broadcasting premises<sup>1</sup> and "reactionary" newspapers were without supplies of newsprint).

(d) Action Committees were firmly established in all factories, offices and local governmental bodies. They were the perfect equivalent of the "local Soviets" which demonstrated their efficacy not only in Russia but also in each of the post-war changes of regime in the Balkan countries. The purge carried out by them was in full swing.

<sup>1</sup>Although his speech was prepared, the President's announcement on Monday that he would address the nation by radio was not fulfilled because he was not permitted to broadcast. One can only infer that he, too, had been classed as "unreliable" by the Communist Party.



(e) Non-Communist political parties no longer had any effective administration, and were deprived of their office premises and most of their secretarial personnel of importance were under arrest.

(f) The Ministers who had resigned were in fact no longer in office although their resignations had not yet been accepted.

By the time the President was presented with the final ultimatum by Prime Minister Gottwald, who, in his unlimited obedience to the Kremlin, was void of any sentimental or patriotic considerations, and was merely the tool of a party and power which believed that only a ruthless tenacity would overcome the final obstacle to achieving their aims, the *coup d'état* was already a *fait accompli*.

Behind the scenes other strings had been pulled. For instance, the non-political "Association of Czech Partisans", which was known to be subject to strong Communist influence, decided at a meeting on Monday, the 23rd, to make an appeal to President Beneš and to Mr. Laušman, the Chairman of the Social Democratic Party, in which a proposal identical with the Communist demands was made for the solution of the crisis. The letter addressed to the President ran:

"Loyal to our fallen comrades and true to the ideals for which we fought . . . in the interest of the people and the happy development of the Republic, we ask you, Mr. President, to accept the resignations tendered by the Ministers of the three parties who have proved false to the ideals of the National Revolution and who defend conspirators, harmful elements and enemies of the Republic."

Mr. Laušman was urged to realise that "at this historic moment the future peaceful development of the Republic and the safety of democracy and the people's order depends on the policy of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party", and that he should "do all in his power to support the Premier, Mr. Klement Gottwald, and not to betray the unanimous stand of the Czech and Slovak partisans!"

The general resolution adopted at the meeting stated:  
"We have faith in our National Security Corps and its leaders. We appeal to all members of the security corps; guard the Republic! Well guard our newly-won freedom! Ignore the cry of the reaction at home and abroad and proceed mercilessly against all that might threaten the country's security and the achievements of the National Revolution! Nip all provocation

in the bud and make it impossible for anyone to spread propaganda against our State.

"We pledge ourselves to the Premier, Mr. Klement Gottwald, to fulfil any tasks necessary. We are ready to defend the people's democratic regime with all the means at our disposal!"

It should be remembered that in 1947, when the armed groups of Banderovits were crossing Czechoslovak territory, the non-Communist parties turned down for obvious reasons the Communist suggestion that partisans should be armed to aid the police and Army in dealing with these few hundred fugitives who were trying to reach the western occupation zones in Austria. Now, when the internal crisis in Czechoslovakia had reached its peak, it was clear why they were to be armed—the partisans were ready to defend the Prime Minister and his regime with all the means at their disposal! This was not a mere slogan, but an unveiled declaration of armed support for the minority against the majority.

It was in the knowledge of this advanced state of preparedness, of which the partisan preparations to do battle were just a typical example, that on 25th February in the morning the Prime Minister drove in his Soviet-built Packard<sup>1</sup> to see President Beneš.

The discussion between the President and the Prime Minister lasted almost two hours. As far as it can be reconstructed from the reports of people who afterwards spoke with the President, Gottwald's primary object was to convince the President that the resignations of the twelve Ministers must be accepted, because, as he said, public opinion would no longer permit of their participation in the Government. He promised that acceptance of the resignations would not be misused to set up an all-Communist Government.

The President reiterated his earlier pronouncement that it was not his function to expell anyone, but, on the contrary, it was his duty to see that every party of the National Front was represented in the new Government. He said:

"Not all the people wish me to betray democracy and establish a totalitarian regime, as your party intends, Mr. Prime Minister. You are asking me to be false to the principles I have defended my whole life, the principles of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk which we applied when liberating Czechoslovakia. I could not agree

<sup>1</sup>In autumn 1947 the Prime Minister received, as a gift, three of the latest models of the Soviet built Packard, known in Soviet Russia as the "Ziss 111". He kept one, and allocated one each to Zápotočský, the Communist Chairman of U.R.O., and Siroky, the Slovak Communist Vice-Premier. As the cars were an official "State gift" from the Soviet, one would have expected that the Speaker of the House, Mr David (Czech Socialist), who as a personality in Czechoslovakia was second only to Beneš, and another distinguished personage, such as the aged Vice-Premier, Mgr. Srámek (Catholic People's Party), might have benefited, but the Communists were incapable of any such gesture.

to what you demand. If I authorise the resignations, it will be to prevent the division of the country, and to prevent the bloodshed you would provoke; and even if I am made to sign, I am confident that our people will understand why it happened, and will demonstrate that these means you are employing are alien to them and that you have underestimated the moral strength of the nation."

Mr. Gottwald was less confident than when he began. He said he understood that all political parties must be represented in the future Government, which he had been trying to achieve ever since the crisis started. He gave the President his assurance that he would observe this necessity, but he refused to open any negotiations with those who had "betrayed", as "the people would not stand for it". He claimed that his new Government already had the assured support of a considerable Parliamentary majority.

Throughout the post-war period Beneš had done everything possible to exploit his political wisdom for the benefit and security of lasting co-operation with the Communists. A British journalist, before leaving Czechoslovakia after several months' stay in the summer of 1947, told me: "If ever the miracle is achieved that Communism works side by side with other political beliefs, it will be in Czechoslovakia." He added: "Thanks to Beneš—the political mathematician!"

In these critical days the illusion that the Communists wanted to co-operate was destroyed beyond repair. Though it had not deceived Beneš for a long time, this final unmasking was the bitterest time of his life. He deserved better treatment at the hands of the Kremlin and from the Politburo in Prague, as well as from the West, which had written off Czechoslovakia as a democracy before she was in sight of trouble, and thus gave up the fight first.

A paragraph describing the period from 1936 to 1938 in Beneš's *Memoirs* underlines the truth of the maxim that "History repeats itself". Beneš wrote:

"In that time of anxiety, sorrow and uneasiness I asked myself again and again just where it could end. As I had sufficient general diplomatic experience and understanding of the historical logic of world events, I saw how Europe was heading for destruction and how everybody's selfishness was contributing towards this end. Everyone will understand my spiritual state in those years, when I felt directly how, step by step, the life-work of Masaryk and myself was falling away and how the world was rushing into an abyss."

Beneš was heard again to say in 1948: "The outcome of this may well be tragedy." He still fought to avert it. Before Prime

Minister Gottwald left, Dr. Beneš gave him a letter where he once again explained his point of view, that he could not step back, but had to be firm:

"I fully feel the great responsibility of this fateful moment of our national life. From the beginning of this crisis I have considered the situation as it developed and I related these events to the great developments in the world. I am well aware of the strong forces which bear on the present situation. . . .

"You are aware of my sincerely democratic faith. I cannot but remain loyal to it, also at this moment, because democracy according to my conviction is the only reliable and permanent basis for a decent and dignified life. I insist on parliamentary democracy and on parliamentary government. I cannot act otherwise, unless I betray my own principles. . . .

"I consider *all* our political parties to be bearers of political responsibility associated in the National Front, which proved its value until recently when the crisis began. . . .

"I have therefore negotiated with the five political parties; I have listened to their views. They are grave and I cannot disregard them. I must therefore appeal again to all to find agreement in a parliamentary manner and through the National Front.

"It is clear to me that the post of Prime Minister must be filled by the Chairman of the strongest party, Mr. Klement Gottwald. It is also clear to me that Socialism is the way of life which the majority of our nation desires. I believe that a certain measure of freedom and harmony, those essential principles of our whole national life, are compatible with Socialism. During our entire history our nation had always passionately fought for freedom. History has also shown us where discord leads . . . I believe that reasonable agreement is possible, because it is absolutely essential."

Those who know Beneš, when reading these lines of his, written at a time when he was no longer in doubt what were those "strong forces which bear on the present situation", will understand his feelings, full of recollection of the two long exiles, when he had fought foreign oppression of his homeland and of his nation. The letter is a direct refusal to accept the proposal of the Prime Minister, which, though it included nominally the names of persons from all political parties, was not agreed upon with the Executives of the different parties, but with individuals whose standing demonstrated to the President that they would be mere tools in Communist hands. Beneš could not but realise that this was a revolution carried out in accordance with true Marxist theory, with the fullest preparation, and launched at an opportune time internationally.

Even if Mr. Gottwald's all-party representation had more than face-value, it was still out of proportion to the strength of each party. It reversed the balance of political representation by giving several additional seats to Communists or well-known Communist sympathisers, and allocating, for instance, to the Slovak Democratic Party only one Under Secretary instead of a Deputy Premier, three Ministers and one Under Secretary!

At one o'clock the radio suddenly announced that the resignations of the twelve Ministers had been accepted and that the formation of the new Government was a matter of a few hours only.

No one was more surprised than the resigning Ministers. They knew that no negotiations had been conducted with their party leaders; they were informed, however, that the Prime Minister had been in touch since Monday with certain of the M.P.s from the non-Communist parties. One of these was either Father Plojhar, who, supported by the Ministry of the Interior, had taken over the newspaper of the Catholic People's Party, or Dr. Neuman of the Socialist Party, who had been at variance with his party's policy for a long time. Many of these non-Communists, who were now suggested as members of the new Government, were M.P.s, but would not have been permitted to stand in the next elections, because of inefficiency, divergence from the party line, or personal misbehaviour. It must be admitted that Mr. Gottwald's greatest success was scored in his dealings with the Social Democratic Party, when Laušman agreed to come to terms with Fierlinger and thus completely ignored the outcome of the Brno Party Congress where, under Laušman's guidance, Fierlinger had been swept out of the way. This new governmental body was composed in a fashion never experienced in Czechoslovakia's many years of parliamentary history.

When the news reached Slovakia, the Communist Chairman of the Slovak Board of Commissioners announced that the Slovak Democratic Party representatives could not be accepted when their Ministers had resigned in the Central Government. He put them out of office without more ado and the remaining Commissioners took over their charges provisionally.

Specially-printed editions of the Communist and crypto-Communist press soon proclaimed that the new Government was in sight. A great mass meeting of the working people was called up for the afternoon in Wenceslaus Square, which the Prime Minister would address. It was expected that an announcement would be made about the composition of the new Government; or if the proposal was rejected, that the Communist Party would incite the General Strike which was envisaged during the one-hour token strike and which Zápotocký had threatened to call.

The air of tension was increased by the news of the large-scale purge the Action Committees were carrying out. Many arrests were made, especially in Slovakia, under the pretence of rounding up a big spy ring, which was supposed to have acted on behalf of "two Western Powers".

It was later that afternoon when the students of Prague assembled and marched towards the Castle for the second time, hoping that their appearance would show the President the firm stand taken by the youth of the country and would give him some moral support in his opposition to the Communist proposals. There were about 25,000 of them and they were hailed by the passers-by as they walked through the streets, led by a flag-bearer. They were calm and serious; this was no laughing or shouting matter for them. When they reached the narrow streets of Mala Strana, the old part of the town surrounding the Castle, they were met by strong police detachments and were ordered to disperse. The police were fully armed with rifles and Sten guns and threatened to open fire. The columns of students, following behind, halted, not knowing what had happened up at the front. They stood waiting. Suddenly more policemen appeared in dozens on all sides, and ran towards them, with their machine-guns levelled. The students scattered in all directions, into alleys, up side streets and into the park. At the head of the columns the students decided to continue in their march, but the police began to push them back with rifle butts. An excited policeman fired a shot and hit one of the students; the others panicked and were chased away from the vicinity of the Castle. One larger group passed the Czernin Palais and, to my surprise, I saw that the police were followed by armed militia using not only rifles but also pistols and Sten guns. When I saw the grim faces of those men I could not help thinking what a sorry picture it was to see Czechs hunting down their neighbours' sons with machine-guns.

People were by then assembling in Wenceslaus Square, being brought to the meeting-place by lorries from the more distant suburbs, or in processions directly from the factories where work was once again interrupted. Lately production had dropped alarmingly, thanks to the prevailing tension and the political meetings held everywhere, but it was apparently of no importance to the instigators of all the disturbance, who saw ahead of them only the fulfilment of the dreams they had had ever since 1920, when the split in the Social Democrat Party gave birth to the new militant and revolutionary Communist movement.

There were also non-Communists in the crowd, since it was already practically impossible and even dangerous for any factory-worker to absent himself from the organised parties

Come on join us, let's out there  
together, let's make suggestions  
together, let's insist on being  
heard - and actions are bound  
to follow -

It's going to be a hard year -  
but we if the U N Association do  
not despair, we have faith and  
we need you all to reinforce our  
endeavors. Please let the year 1949  
be a great milestone for our federation -  
We can shape our own future if we  
let together - Please!  
The God bless and keep us, *Truly sincerely,  
J. Masaryk*

PORTION OF JAN MASARYK'S MESSAGE TO THE WORLD FEDERATION  
OF U N ASSOCIATIONS

The original of this message was smuggled out of Czechoslovakia by  
the author



GOTWALD ON FEBRUARY 21ST 1948 READS HIS APPEAL TO ORGANISE  
ACTION COMMITTEES OR LOCAL SOVIETS



attending the rally. The Minister of Information, Vaclav Kopecký, spoke first. He yelled his usual anti-Western, anti-reactionary and pro-Soviet tirades, and yet more threats. "The working class has the strength to make her voice heard as far as the Castle" (meaning Beneš), "and to force its will in the Assembly!"

He was right when he said that force would be used to do the will of the Communist leaders, who claimed to represent the working class. Even while he spoke the final drama of the Government crisis was being played in Dr. Beneš's office, where the President was not only presented with the list containing the names of the new Government, which he still declined to recognise; another list was produced, bearing the names of several hundred of the President's closest associates and personal friends, which had been prepared by the Minister of the Interior. Those listed were to be arrested, and considered as hostages, to prevent the "reactionaries" from causing bloodshed, should Dr. Beneš be unwilling to change his mind. On the other hand, if he was prepared to accept the peaceful solution of the crisis proposed by the Communists no one would come to any harm.

This was a terrible humiliation for the aged, tired man, who still bore the name of President Constructor. The strain of the last few days was telling on his already weak constitution and he spoke with difficulty. For the second time in ten years he bore the responsibility of deciding for his people—to fight or not to fight. As in 1938, he did not give the call to arms, in his knowledge that no help could come from the West.<sup>1</sup>

"The State must survive, and if it has to survive it must have some form of government," were his words as he signed his acceptance of the new Government, the only course open to him. It was the end of parliamentary democracy in Czechoslovakia.

Beneš had saved many lives, lives of people who certainly did not want to be saved at that price. He did it with the right of a man who at that moment was also signing his own death warrant. What was now in store for him could not be described as life. He was not even spared the setting-up of an Action Committee in his own presidential office, which dismissed his most loyal supporters and assistants.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>This had been discussed by Mr. Masaryk and Mr. Truman in November 1947, and the American President had said Czechoslovakia could not count on more than moral help in the case of an emergency, even if Soviet intervention was inevitable.

<sup>2</sup>The pressure exerted on the President is barely concealed in the official publication afterwards issued by the Ministry of Information on the February crisis, called *What Happened in Czechoslovakia*. It says "President Beneš, convinced that any further delay would lead to bloodshed, accepted the will of the people and approved of the resignations tendered by the reactionary Ministers."

The official report issued read:

"On Wednesday, 25th February, at 4.30 p.m., President Beneš received Prime Minister, Klement Gottwald, and informed him that he accepted the resignation<sup>1</sup> of the National Socialist, People's Party and Slovak Democratic Party Ministers. He also informed Prime Minister Gottwald that Deputy Prime Minister Tymeš and Food Minister Majer had resigned on that day, and that he had also decided to accept the Prime Minister's proposal concerning the reconstruction of the Government and that he had already nominated the new Cabinet and Ministers."

Soon after 4.30 p.m. the Prime Minister appeared in Wenceslaus Square where he announced the President's capitulation to the mass meeting. When he introduced the new Governmental list, he said: "The President did not arrive at his decision easily, but finally accepted the will of the people."

The "will of the people" plays a high role in the vocabulary of the Communist movement, and one must ask what it actually is. Does the will of the people mean voting for an artificial National Front, which, as we have seen in the Balkans, presents a single list of candidates and no other alternative? Is it a mass meeting of fifty to a hundred thousand people collected together in Prague by Communist Trade Unions and acclaiming resolutions on demands prepared by the Cominform or by the Politburo in the Kremlin?

When recommending the new Government to the confidence of the nation on Wenceslaus Square, the Prime Minister also mentioned that the Cabinet was composed of men who would "accept the will of the people"! Who were the men ready to do this? Here is a short account of them:

*Prime Minister (Communist)*, Klement Gottwald, who in 1935 was charged with sedition, fled to Moscow, and was elected, together with Thorez and Togliatti, to the Committee of the Comintern Congress.

*Deputy Prime Minister (Communist)*, Antonín Zápotocký, Chairman of U.R.O., who declared at a public meeting: "If Parliament does not accept our demands, we shall do away with Parliament."

*Deputy Prime Minister (Social Democrat)*, Bohumil Laušman, who at Zorin's suggestion tried to win Minister Majer for co-operation with the Communists.

*Deputy Prime Minister (Slovak Communist)*, Viliam Široký, who after Munich escaped to France and, in co-operation with French

<sup>1</sup>This report admits that the official acceptance of the resignations occurred at four-thirty p.m., whereas the radio had announced it at one p.m.

Communists, worked to undermine the national will to resist or partake in the "Imperialist war". Some of his Czech associates were imprisoned by the French police.

*Foreign Affairs (Non-party)*, Jan Masaryk, who said: "With this Government I shall enjoy governing," and died within a fortnight.

*National Defence (Non-party)*, General Ludvik Svoboda, who before the war taught Hungarian at the Military Academy.

*Foreign Trade (Communist)*, Dr. Antonin Gregor, a judge, who long before the *putsch* interpreted the law according to Marxist and Leninist doctrines.

*Interior (Communist)*, Václav Nosek, who was recommended by Dr. Huhert Ripka as follows: "He would be the only member of the Government who after ordering me to be hanged would drop a tear somewhere in secret."

*Finance (Communist)*, Dr. Jaromir Dolansky, who to non-Communists used to promise everything and do nothing. He produced funds as if by magic for the Communist Party, and dismissed as a general practice nearly every non-Communist official above executive rank in his Ministry.

*Education (Communist)*, Dr. Zdenek Nejedlý, who ordered Stalin's picture to be hung in every classroom in Czechoslovakia. He carried a Soviet flag on his official car.

*Information (Communist)*, Vaclav Kopecký, who said: "As long as our youth read *Rude Pravo* (the Communist daily) we do not need Universities."

*Industry (Social Democrat)*, Zdenek Fierlinger, aptly entitled by the Swiss weekly *Weltwoche* as the "gravedigger of Czechoslovak Social Democracy".

*Agriculture (Slovak Communist)*, Julius Duris, who said of the elected representatives of the nation: "No need to take any notice of them—they are only M.P.s." He organised protest deputations to Parliament consisting of fifty or more peasants regardless of the law which forbade deputations of more than three persons.

*Internal Trade (Communist)*, František Krajcar, aged thirty-five, by profession a barber, born in Vienna.

*Transport (People's Party)*, Alois Petr, already marked for withdrawal from candidacy in the next elections by his party.

*Public Works (Czech Socialist)*, Dr. Emanuel Slechta, whose wife was a member of two parties at once—his own, and the Communist since 1945, secretly.

*Posts (Czech Socialist)*, Dr. Alois Najman, who on the 24th February denied to his Party Executive that he was negotiating with the Communists to enter the Government.

*Social Welfare (Social Democrat)*, Evzen Erban, during the war Secretary-General of the German-sponsored Trade Union

N.O.U.Z. and organiser of the "Heydrich Recreational Scheme for War Workers" (Heydrich was successively Himmler's deputy in Norway, France and the Czech Protectorate).

† *Health (People's Party)*, Father Josef Plojhar, who was barred from officiating as a priest of the Church by the Archbishop of Prague, Dr. Beran.

*Justice (Communist)*, Dr. Alexej Čepička, who in the May revolution of 1945 declared religious marriages invalid, disbanded the Regional Law Courts. Married Gottwald's daughter in summer 1948.

*Food (Social Democrat)*, Ludmila Jankovcova, the only woman Minister, who declared: "I belong to the extreme left," and voted for Fierlinger when he was ousted at the Brno Congress.

*Unification of Laws (Slovak Freedom Party)*, Dr. Vavro Srohar, aged eighty-one, who, when he heard about his inclusion in the new Government, rang up the Prime Minister and asked whether it was true or not. His second question was whether Masaryk was in it too, and when the reply was again in the affirmative he said: "Well, in that case it's good enough for me too!"

*Foreign Under-Secretary (Communist)*, Dr. Vladimír Clementis, who left the Czechoslovak Army in Britain in 1940 because he did not want to fight against Germany in an imperialist war—in obedience to Kremlin-issued instructions to Communists

*Defence Under-Secretary (Slovak Democratic)*, Dr. Jan Ševčík, who replaced the four Cabinet Ministers formerly representing the majority party in Slovakia, 62 per cent strong, in direct disloyalty to his party.

Thus in the new Government there were twelve Communists, four Social Democrats or crypto-Communists (they knew that the Social Democratic Party would merge with the Communist Party before long), five renegade members of the non-Marxist parties (Socialists, Catholics, and Slovak Democrats), one member of the Slovak Freedom Party (which had two members of Parliament), and two non-party men.

The official pronouncement of the new Government was followed by an appeal to celebrate the event by hanging out flags all over Czechoslovakia because it was considered as a time for rejoicing about the victory of the working people over the reactionary forces which marked the culminating point of the drive for liberation.

There were few flags to be seen, however. Prague was like a mourning city. People went silently about their business and coffee houses were empty. At home whole families were surrounding the radio sets, listening to the B.B.C. and waiting for some miraculous announcement which did not, and could not, have come.

Newspapers appeared with uniform announcements and comments. The hated word known from the time of the German occupation—"gleichgeschaltet"—again entered everyday life, and the foreign press, the pride of the Prague news-stands, which had been the only ones behind the Iron Curtain selling the "reactionary newspapers" disappeared; the *Daily Graphic*, *Daily Mail*, *Daily Mirror*, all Catholic papers, *Illustrated* and several other weeklies were officially banned. The rest were unobtainable.

People were still hoping President Beneš would make his promised address to the nation by radio. Instead an official spokesman spoke scathingly of the Western press, describing the foreign correspondents as "international reactionary war-mongers".

The purge among all classes of employees was at its height during the rest of the week. Arrests were a daily occurrence. Three Socialist M.P.s, Dr. Krajina, the Secretary General of the Party and a war hero, Mr. Hora and Mr. Cizek, the two M.P.s who had made fame by their unflinching attempts to keep the police out of the reach of the Communist Party, were arrested in spite of their parliamentary immunity. Their wives appealed to the President to intervene, and he spoke to Gottwald by telephone and secured their release. Dr. Krajina had been arrested by five armed policemen, one of whom spoke only Russian.

Two of the Communist Ministers made speeches which confirmed certain historic facts concerning the crisis. The newly-appointed Minister of Foreign Trade, Dr. Gregor, stated that "the Czechoslovak nation could not have gained such a well-deserved victory over reactionaries supported from abroad without being helped in its effort by the other Slav States, especially Soviet Russia". The Minister of Information, Kopecký, received the General Managers of the Czechoslovak broadcasting organisation, Mr. Lastovicka and Dr. Burian, and expressed his satisfaction for the invaluable services rendered to the Gottwald Government by the organisation in those all-important days. Presumably he meant by communicating all Communist Party orders during the *coup*!

One event that caught the interest of the public was the resignation of the war-time Prime Minister, Msgr. Šrámek, who gave up his parliamentary mandate and declared his party, the Catholic People's Party, as dissolved, to save it from collaboration with the Communists. The party which then bore the old name was sponsored by the Communist Party.

Developments in Czechoslovakia, of course, had an immediate reaction abroad. "The lesson of Prague" was the topical theme of the world press and broadcasting systems, and many leading statesmen gave public expression to their opinion.

The official attitude of the United States, British and French Governments towards the events in Czechoslovakia was put forward in a declaration made simultaneously in Washington, London and Paris, which was banned for publication in Czechoslovakia by the Press Section of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Information. It stated:

"The Governments of the United States, Great Britain and France have followed with attention the recent course of events in Czechoslovakia which jeopardized the very existence of the principles of liberty to which all democratic nations are attached.

"They declare that, thanks to a crisis artificially and deliberately provoked, certain methods already exploited elsewhere have been used to bring about suspension of free parliamentary institutions and the establishment of a disguised dictatorship of a single party under the cloak of a Government of National Union.

"They can only condemn the development the consequences of which must surely be disastrous to the Czechoslovak people, who again proved, during the sufferings of a Second World War, their devotion to the cause of liberty."

The only places where this declaration was available to the Czechoslovak public were the windows of the British and American Information Services on Prikopy and Narodni Street, two of the main thoroughfares of Prague, where hundreds queued to read them; and of course those listening regularly to the B.B.C. and other broadcasts from foreign stations, which during those days had become as popular as they were during the war, knew the exact wording, too.

In Britain the Lord President of the Council, Mr. Morrison, addressing a meeting in East Lewisham, said: "The news from Czechoslovakia has depressed every good democrat in Britain and lovers of freedom all over the world. The events are so sadly like those of Munich days, so horribly similar to the Hitler technique. It is an effort to destroy a nation's liberty from within, by fifth columnists, by men who owe loyalty not to their own country but to a foreign power."

Mr. Anthony Eden, speaking at Leamington, said: "In less than a week the crisis provoked by Communists has crushed the nation's historic parties and brought to power a Government which though ostensibly a coalition is in truth completely dominated by the Communists. Already the sinister power of the police State is at work throughout the country and—ultimate cynicism—the people are ordered to hang out flags and to 'rejoice'. The distance from London to Prague is little more than the distance

from Land's End to John o' Groat's!" He compared Nazi force with the methods of Communism which he said "are more subtle but no less ominous".

In France, at a luncheon given by the Anglo-American Press Association, M. Bidault, the Foreign Secretary spoke in more general terms:

"The happenings now taking place in a key point of Europe could not but be a subject of weighty preoccupation for France."

In Italy the fate of Czechoslovakia was described by commentators as a timely warning and it was pointed out that election day on April 18th would decide whether Italy would be able to escape the same fate and disaster.

In U.S.A. control of exports to Czechoslovakia was considered, the cotton credit of five million pounds was annulled and the World Bank showed a hostile attitude to the application for a credit of eighty-seven million pounds for reconstruction.

In Finland the Socialist Party expressed its fears that Stalin's renewed insistence on a pact of mutual military aid would lead to a Communist coup in Finland modelled on the pattern of Czechoslovakia. Soon afterwards it became known that Stalin had pointed out to President Paasikivi that his country was the only one of Russia's eight neighbours who did not have an alliance with her! Censure of the *coup d'état* was expressed in practically every country in the world outside the Iron Curtain.

The next day, 27th February, Dr. Beneš received the fifteen new Ministers in an audience which lasted ten minutes. He stated briefly that he had accepted the resignations and signed the decrees of nomination. He said to the Prime Minister:

"You have said correctly that my decision was not easy. On the contrary, for me personally, it was very difficult. Any other solution would have deepened the crisis, would have led to sharp division of the nation, and eventually this would have ended in general chaos. You want to conduct State affairs in a new way, and a new form of democracy. My wishes are addressed to the nation and the State, that this new way may be favourable to all." Those were the last words Beneš spoke officially in the Castle of Prague.

In his answer Gottwald found it necessary to attack the declaration issued by the Western Powers. He rejected "such ill-founded proclamations from abroad, which are a danger to liberty and parliamentary methods". He said: "They who bear the responsibility for Munich, and who made pacts with Hitler's Germany, risking our skins, and who destroyed treaties made with us, should not lecture us."

The same day all foreign journalists were invited to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where Mr. Klinger of the Press

Section and Dr. Kosta<sup>1</sup> from the Ministry of Information warned the representatives of the world press against "further violation of good will and libel of Czechoslovakia's reputation, otherwise the Ministries would be forced to deprive them of facilities for communication". Dr. Kosta suggested that in future the press should rely on official sources for their information. Mr. Klinger then read examples of "unreliable" reporting, which I think must have highly flattered Karl Robson of the *News Chronicle*, who in fact had written some of the most accurate reports of what had been happening, and who (and that apparently was his greatest crime) predicted those events well in advance.

This occurrence, though one of the less important, was significant of the new order.

Even sports clubs were purged of "unreliable" athletes and officials by their Action Committees; wholesale trade was eliminated, export and import completely nationalised, and all land property over 123 acres confiscated. . . .

The President of the Republic received General Svoboda, the Minister of National Defence, General Božek, the Chief of Staff, and General Klapalek, in the presence of his military adviser, General Hasal, for the second time that week, and told them that his resignation would be only a matter of days. He had decided to leave the Castle of Prague for ever. He ordered his presidential flag bearing the motto "Truth Prevails" to be taken down and an official report to be issued to the press. The press officer wrote:

"The President of the Republic, Dr. Edward Beneš, and Mme Hana Beneš, travelled to their country house in Sezimovo Usti on Friday, 27th May, leaving the Castle of Prague at 15.23 p.m."

The President asked the note to be read to him, and then he dictated another in its place, worded so that it was clear that the Castle of Prague, the Castle of the Czech Kings and of the great Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, the President Liberator, was no longer his home.

"The President of the Republic, Dr. Edward Beneš, and Mme Hana Beneš, retired from the Castle of Prague on Friday, 27th May, and departed at 15.23 p.m. for their private home in Sezimovo Usti."

<sup>1</sup>Dr Kosta has since been sharply warned by the Communist Party Executive as his own literary work shows many deviations from the orthodox Leninist-Marxist teaching



## Jan Masaryk—A Czech Martyr

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."*

GALATIANS V. 22-3.

"I'VE HAD no orders yet"—that is the strangest answer I ever heard pass Mr. Masaryk's lips. These words were uttered at the Foreign Press Conference in the Czernin Palais in Prague in December 1947 when the Minister of Foreign Affairs was asked the following question:

"Mr. Masaryk, Yugoslavia, it has been announced, has concluded a pact of friendship and mutual aid with Hungary, which is far more comprehensive than the one existing between Yugoslavia and your country. Are you going to adjust your treaty on those lines?"

"I've had no orders yet," Mr. Masaryk responded quickly. He had returned in a rather dispirited mood from the United Nations Assembly in Lake Success, and this was just the answer not to dispel the rumours of his failure to maintain a policy more or less independent of the Eastern bloc. If it had been the case I am sure he would even have said: "The order from Moscow has just reached me," and would have waved the message before the journalists' eyes.

In Lake Success, stranded by the internationally difficult situation which drew Czechoslovakia more and more behind the Iron Curtain, Masaryk was not very happy. Some hundred and fifty foreign and over one hundred Czechoslovak journalists were waiting in the Czernin Palais that day to hear what he had to say about it.

"Some people think," said the Minister, "that not much has been achieved. My opinion is that if we went there for nothing else but the creation of the United Nations appeal for children, it was worth while going." Many of his answers to the questions fired at him were never quoted by the world press, as no one wanted to disappoint Masaryk's trust in his fellow journalists (he considered himself one of them). His reply to the awkward question posed by a foreign journalist on Yugoslavia was not published.

Masaryk was also asked whether the treaty between the two countries, known as enemies of long standing, could work. I saw a sparkle in his eye, as if he had been waiting for that very question. He began to tell a story.

"There was once a woman who was expecting a baby and rushed to the local university to have it enrolled at the theological faculty; but it happened that she gave birth to twins—and both were girls!" Everyone was laughing at Masaryk's way of telling them to wait and see.

Talking about the partition of Palestine, he said that it was not an ideal solution, but it was the only solution and we had to accept it.

"During the German occupation I got 5,000 Jews out of Czechoslovakia and I am more proud of that than of anything else I have done in my life. I am not ashamed to talk about it because it does not mean that I took part in illegal immigration or that I agree with terrorism. It was a choice between the gas chambers and comparative safety. I wanted them to survive," he said.

He told us many more things that afternoon—about his meetings with Allied statesmen and his journeys here and there, and it seemed to us that this time he had economic and social questions on his mind rather than political ones. He remarked on the talks he had with General Marshall:

"I did not tell the American Foreign Secretary that Czechoslovakia would collapse if we did not get their help." In fact Masaryk was no longer expecting it, because he went on to say:

"I do not care where the cow was milked to supply milk for our children. I would buy it from the devil if need be, because the children must have it and that is a cause important enough to justify it."

His unconventional manner and originality, which were his strong point, won him many friends in Britain and overseas. When he was leaving for Europe someone brought to his notice an evening paper which had published the news on his departure under the headline, "Hero Goes Home". "Hero goes home," repeated Masaryk. "I do not see any heroism in it if someone who doesn't need to pay his passage out of his own pocket boards a steamer, disappears into a first-class cabin and sails for home. Maybe," he added, "they know a bit more about it than I do!"

Masaryk knew no bitterness, even when things were very much against him—not even in the case of Munich.<sup>1</sup> He just cracked a

<sup>1</sup>While lecturing in U.S.A. at Columbia University during the war he said that the partition of Czechoslovakia would be worth while if it saved peace, but he doubted it would. He personally was more interested in saving Europe as a whole than caring so much for frontiers.

joke about it because he hated to make other people sad. He very much preferred to entertain them.

To many people the names of Czechoslovakia and Jan Masaryk were synonymous. He loved Britain and said so on any suitable occasion, especially during the war to his countrymen at home, who knew him to be an unquestionable patriot. His aim was to make his own country as free, as happy, and as tolerant as Britain.

"The people here," he said over the B.B.C. in February 1940, "go quietly about their business; there is no clamour, no excitement, no self-glorification. For almost twenty years I have been living here, and I know very well how difficult it is for an Englishman to say what is going on in his soul. He is especially reserved towards foreigners, yet here and there there is a sudden flash of sentiment. The mother of a boy who is a seaman told me the other day, 'I lost my husband in the last year of the World War. Sometimes it seemed to me that it was in vain. To-day my son is going to war, and I know very well that it is not for nothing. After much thought I have realised it is better to die on one's knees than to live on one's knees by enabling Hitler to win a victory. My boy will help to save our freedom and to return yours to you.' This is a typical English attitude," concluded Masaryk, "even when there is a secret tear in the eye!"

During the war Masaryk's home was in London, and only when his flat near Victoria was damaged by a bomb did he move to the country. His office was in the big block of flats called Fursecroft, on the corner of George Street near Marble Arch, which were partly turned over to the Czechs for Government offices. I saw him there often as I was fortunate to be one of his collaborators. He wrote an introduction for a booklet I compiled for our friends in America, and I also had among my treasured possessions a letter he wrote to me in appreciation of a study on his father's *Legacy to the English People* which I had published while I was still with the field units of our Army in Britain.

It was no secret that Masaryk, who spent many happy years in London, was easily the most popular diplomat in this country. His ready wit, lively air, his ability to give more pleasure than he took, his realistic optimism, and, last but not least, his success as intermediary between the many exiled Allied Governments, made him a welcome friend to royalty as well as to politicians.

Jan Masaryk's war aim was possibly the simplest any statesman has been able to define. "I want to go home," he declared, "and I want to be a free man!" He explained what he meant:

"If I'm going somewhere by tram in Prague, I want to be able to say loudly that the Government we have installed is a rotten one without being afraid of what the police would have to say about it." He visited the States before America entered the

war and did a great job there. Masaryk was acknowledged to be one of the most able diplomats when it came to bringing about full understanding between fighting Britain and neutral U.S.A.

His regular Wednesday talks over the B.B.C. were an inspiration to the people in Czechoslovakia and, whenever he spoke, the muffled radio sets were switched on all over the country. By his direct and energetic address, holding back nothing, calling everything by its right name, Masaryk did much towards maintaining the morale of his people, who were spiritually suffocating behind the walls of the vast concentration camp the Nazis had made of their land. In September 1939 he went on the air on a memorable occasion in the history of Czech broadcasting. His introduction was brief and to the point:

"I have been given the undeserved honour of opening the daily broadcasts from England in the Czech language. Our programme is a free Czechoslovakia in a free Europe, and for the attainment of this we are ready to sacrifice all. By the name which I bear I solemnly declare to you that we shall win the fight and that truth will prevail.

"The Czechoslovak problem is an integral part of the European problem, and therefore, glorious and beloved Czechoslovak people, be convinced that the rule of thine own things shall again return into thy hands!<sup>1</sup>

"Greetings and au revoir in Prague!"

The next broadcast he made was on the anniversary of Czechoslovakia's independence. He recalled the memory of his father, to whom he was so greatly attached, and his trust in a worthy Czechoslovak people and their future. "My father knew," said Jan Masaryk, "that our aim is to be a decent, fair-dealing and dignified democracy. He knew that Czechoslovakia is part of the Western culture, bound up with it for ever. Let me remind you to-day of his trust and his love. I can hear his voice saying, 'Well, they are good people, and you can deal with them'."

He finished with words which were a prayer:

"Sad and wounded in our hearts, but strong in courage and determination, we vow to thee, dear, sacred and beloved land of ours, that we will remain faithful to thee and that we will give thee back thy freedom. We all love thee with faithful and everlasting love. Amen."

He usually finished his broadcasts with a few words not in his prepared address. He urged the people he loved not to contribute to the German collection of metal, concluding:

"So hide your metal basins and keep your heads up!"

Another time he finished his broadcast with "Chins up and forward march!" or once as simply as "May God give you a good

<sup>1</sup>The last part of the sentence was a quotation from a famous prophecy by Comenius.

night". When announcing the German attack on Soviet Russia, his greeting was "Foes of Hitler of all shades, unite!" thus adapting the Bolshevik slogan "Workers of all nations, unite!"

Jan Masaryk was also an excellent pianist. While in the States, he accompanied the famous Czech singer, Jarmila Novotna, in recording a series of national songs which sold in thousands for the benefit of the victims of Lidice, the village destroyed by the Nazis.

Back in Britain he was cheerful among his countless friends. There was one with whom he had much in common—a warm heart, and excellent understanding for small, oppressed or helpless people. Both were fighters. What Masaryk did with his spoken word, his friend David Low, did with his drawings. Not a few of them were dedicated to Czechoslovakia, not to ridicule her, but as Masaryk put it, "to caress and strengthen her".

When a booklet of Low's cartoons was compiled to show the Czechoslovak people how their struggle for freedom had caught the imagination and interest of the artist, Masaryk wrote the Czech introduction.

"I do not exaggerate when I say that if European policy had been conducted according to David Low's cartoons, there would have been no Second World War. Low did not give recognition to Mussolini, but depicted him as every decent man ought to have seen him. He had the same attitude towards Hitler. Low was not afraid to condemn what was not fair and acceptable to his political instinct, or what was bad. He always warned in good time. All the political mistakes of the last fifteen years were to be found in Low's cartoons before they were even committed. That is Low as a political expert of world reputation." Masaryk's secretary had a standing instruction to cut out and save his friend's cartoons whenever Masaryk went overseas during the war. Among the first things he did on return was to have a look at what Low had "said".

Masaryk was an optimist, but a realist, too, and his understanding of the people of all nations was based on a profound knowledge of them. When he was a young man his father sent him to the United States to work for his living. From 1907 he was employed as a steel worker in the Crane Company in Chicago. He left U.S.A. in 1913 and went home. He told me once that he learned his diplomatic ABC among the steel workers. There were Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, Germans, Latvians and many others in addition to the Americans employed there. It was necessary to get along with all of them. Masaryk spoke their language, that is, the language of the common man, and at the same time he could also talk in academic accents. He could joke in eight languages—not only literary English, Czech, Slovak,

German, French, Yiddish, Hungarian and Russian, but in slang and dialect, too. He could also make himself understood in Serb and Polish. We shall not forget that he was the son of an American mother, Henriette Garrigue, the daughter of a hanker in Brooklyn, whom his father met at the University of Leipzig.

During the First World War Masaryk served as an officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army, though he was never at the front. He could not be trusted as the son of a man who was at war with Austria! In the officers' corps, associating with young men from rich and influential families among the Austrian nobility, he got the second part of his education—the ease of manner, which, combined with his natural simplicity, gave him greatness.

In 1918 Masaryk joined the Czechoslovak Foreign Office and went to Washington. Returning to Prague he was for a time secretary to the Foreign Minister, Dr. Beneš, and finally he went to London as *Chargé d'Affaires*. He became Minister in 1925, and held this office until he resigned after Munich—which was not only a severe blow to him but also a warning.

Lord Jowitt, recalling that tragedy, said about Masaryk:

"I stood by his side at the time of Munich and realised the agony of spirit through which he was passing. Yet he never lost faith. He was convinced that sooner or later that frightful tyranny would be overcome; during all that time I never heard him say one bitter word about the people of this country. He knew that all too soon the scales would be removed from our eyes.

"Then came the war, and even during the difficult times of the war he never lost faith in ultimate victory; the darker the hour the more brightly the flame of that faith shone forth."

I caught a glimpse of Masaryk when he came one day in October 1944 to visit the Czechoslovak Brigade in the Dunkirk sector. He insisted on being taken to the trenches and no one could talk him out of it, in spite of the danger of being sniped at. The Jerries were only a few hundred yards away, so he changed his black hat for an Army beret, which was not so conspicuous. An army cartoonist made a swift portrait for the Army daily paper and asked him to sign it. He wrote underneath:

"I was there and was not frightened—too much! Jan Masaryk." The admiration of the Czech airmen and soldiers completed his war-time triumph as an outstanding personality among the Czech leaders in exile.

Dr. Beneš, in his *Memoirs*, described Masaryk's political activity during the war. He recalled how he met him, soon after Munich, in the States, where he was on a lecture tour. After the events of March 1939 Masaryk returned with him to England and became Minister of Foreign Affairs in the émigré Government. "He knew better than anyone else," states Dr. Beneš, "the

circumstances existing and the leading people, both in England and in the United States, and thus had the greatest and most successful share in the struggle for his country's liberation, to which he rendered great service."

Although Masaryk was a pronounced Westerner, he recognised that there must eventually be equilibrium between the West and East if civilisation was to survive. This was why he strove so hard to bring about an understanding. Like most of the Allied leaders during the war, Masaryk was aware of the intense suffering of the Russian people. He believed it would be possible to bring about a sincere post-war co-operation between the two different political ideologies, and was impressed by the fact that Molotov condemned the Nazi fight against democracy. He also valued Churchill's acceptance of Soviet Russia in the ranks of the defenders of freedom. Molotov acted as a reliable Bolshevik, and Churchill co-operated with Soviet Russia after a quarter of a century's fight against Bolshevism.

Masaryk accompanied Beneš to Moscow when the climax of war had been reached, to see for himself. Both he and Beneš were aware of strange contradictions in the Russian policy which urged them to be on their guard.

The end of the war found Jan Masaryk again in the States—in San Francisco, where he devoted all his abilities to work for the newly-born United Nations Organisation, because he realised that this was the only hope left to mankind of preventing a complete split between the two worlds. One of the few real masters of the spoken word, he knew how to speak less and achieve more than many a great orator. One example will suffice. One American delegate to U.N.O., anxious for publicity, spoke in the plenary assembly for exactly one hour. Masaryk, who followed, spoke for seven minutes. His speech was widely quoted in the world press and was transmitted over many radio-networks. The earlier speaker was not mentioned. The next day he met Jan Masaryk and complained about this unjust treatment.

"Can you tell me the difference between our speeches?" he asked. Masaryk answered without hesitation:

"Fifty-three minutes, sir!"

In international surroundings Masaryk was completely at home and it was not difficult for him to use his supreme powers of oratory for the benefit of many of the small nations, or to help bridge over what appeared to be hopeless gaps. He was an optimist only because he believed there was an honest reason for it.

It happened in Paris, soon after he had made his famous challenge to Hungarian claims—stating in the assembly that for the moment he was not quite sure whether it was Hungary or Czechoslovakia who had won this war side by side with the Allies

—that he was approached by some of the Polish delegates, in private, who suggested that the future of the Teschen territory should be discussed between the Czechs and Poles.

In his easy way Masaryk said: "It is just as though I were falling over. While still falling, you would come and take the watch out of my pocket. Then you would come back and ask the time. Now you know how I feel about Teschen. Are you still interested in discussing the problem with me?" They were not.

Masaryk's ability to strike the right note instantly and at all times became nearly proverbial. He usually spoke unprepared, inspired only by the cause for which he spoke or by the audience he was addressing. In Washington, I am told, Masaryk attended a lunch given by the American General Arnold to honour the R.A.F. Field-Marshal Sir John Dill replied to the speech of their American host. He modestly admitted something to the effect that during the war the R.A.F. had not been completely inactive. Evidently feeling that something more was needed, he turned to Masaryk, who was sitting next to him, and asked: "Do you think, Mr. Masaryk, that I should add a few more words?"

Masaryk stood up and continued on his neighbour's behalf: "I think, ladies and gentlemen, we can safely say that the Field-Marshal has in his heart the same love for the R.A.F. that a mother has for the baby still under her heart!" This was received with great enthusiasm and Sir John Dill whispered to him: "It is extraordinary, Mr. Masaryk, how you can put into one sentence what all of us feel."

Besides genius for description in a few words, Masaryk could change the whole character of a political meeting by a sentence or two, or by a sly joke, ridiculing all that had been previously said, without even commenting on it. Then he would present the case in the true humanitarian spirit of his father; his hearers would invariably respond at once to his mood. This power to sway an audience did not escape the jealous attention of the Communist leaders, in particular Mr. Slánský, the Secretary-General of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia.

One error of judgment on the part of the Western Powers Masaryk opposed with all his energy. He had already been aware for a long time that the Western World had written off Czechoslovakia as an ally. He fully realised how much more difficult, if not impossible, the struggle to prevent the Iron Curtain from really descending would be without the support and understanding of Czechoslovakia's war-time allies in Washington, London, Paris and elsewhere in the West. He did everything in his power to sweep away the impression that Czechoslovakia was already behind the Iron Curtain by inviting friends and delegations, and



sending representatives, students, scientists and businessmen abroad.

When he went to Geneva in 1947 to open the summer school of the World Federation of the United Nations Associations, a discussion took place after his opening address. Someone referred to certain countries, including Czechoslovakia, as "satellites". Masaryk stood up and asked: "Do I look like a satellite?" His listeners realised that he had been hurt by this description.

He brought this subject to the fore again during the Congress of the International Organisation of Journalists, presided over by Mr. Archibald Kenyon, when he said in his address to the representatives of the world press:

"Now you will be touring Czechoslovakia. If you strike an iron curtain in your journeyings, please do ring me up and I'll come and have a look at it." He had no calls.

Masaryk tried constantly to inject into the spirit of the country's everyday life his conviction that it was not necessary that "Czechoslovakia, a loyal ally of the Slav family, should frown on everyone else".

Masaryk's efforts to bring together the two worlds on whose crossroad Czechoslovakia is unhappily situated were best followed in his work in the United Nations Organisation and in the organisation referred to as the "Small United Nations", that is, the World Federation of the United Nations Associations of which he was elected the first President in 1946 in Luxembourg, when he was leading his country's delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris. I remember telling him on the telephone from Luxembourg of his election. He thanked me for the news, and remarked: "Another worry, but this one I should like to make a success of." Only a day or two later he was already discussing at length with Clark Eichelberger, the Chairman of the American U.N.A., the way to run the W.F.U.N.A., or, as he called it later, the "clearing house for constructive thought and action". It was his ideal to develop W.F.U.N.A. into a fighting organisation for the support of the United Nations and for the preservation of peace. He often urged the public "to devote at least 10 per cent of the same effort it used to win the war to prevent the next one". He added once, "that would deprive me of all my worries about a lasting peace. When the children of our children read the history books of our times they will have a lot to wonder about!"

In this capacity he could be considered as the most successful propagandist of the United Nations idea, a work he undertook whole-heartedly, as he believed that "the United Nations belong to the few positive results of the last war".

The annual Congress of the W.F.U.N.A. was held in 1947 in the famous West Bohemian Spa, Mariánské Lázně, where

Masaryk urged the representatives of some twenty countries from all over the world to become "partisans of peace". During his speech many of us realised how truly it had been said once that, if Masaryk had not been a great diplomat, he would have been a great artist or great actor. Not only by words, but by a pause, a gesture, or by the expression on his face, or the movement of his hands, as for instance when he used the phrase "Many disquieting rumours are in the air", Masaryk could say more than many writers were able to say in a whole chapter. That night Masaryk proposed the toast. It was to "Mother Europe, this old Continent of ours, both East and West!"

He was very much in favour of all attempts to strengthen his country's ties with the West, to restore equilibrium after inclusion, step by step and against her will, into the orbit of Soviet foreign policy. Together with President Beneš he hoped that a pact with France would not only bring this Western Power back to Central Europe, but would also help to put an end to any revival—for propaganda purposes—of the Munich history, which, he knew, was still stored by the Communists in the background against later use. He was therefore anxiously hoping for good results from the journey planned by leading Vice-Prime Minister, Dr. Zenkl, to France. For the same reason he did everything to avoid the signing of the proposed pact with Bulgaria, which was not only to be against German aggression, but could even have involved Czechoslovakia in a conflict with the West.

In the autumn of 1947 Masaryk left for the United States to attend the Plenary Session of the United Nations Organisation. His task over there, after Czechoslovakia's enforced withdrawal from the Marshall Plan, became more and more difficult, though everyone knew it was by no means the country's or Masaryk's fault. Part of his stay he spent on a sick bed, with a dislocated shoulder. When at the Assembly his attention was mainly engaged on manoeuvres to prevent the election of Czechoslovakia to replace Poland in the Security Commission, where Poland was the constant second to U.S.S.R. in the inevitable nine votes to two. Because of her alliance with Soviet Russia, and her strategical position, apart from the other influences I have explained more fully elsewhere, Czechoslovakia would have had practically no alternative but to vote with the U.S.S.R. in opposition to the other nine member nations. Masaryk attained his object. He joked: "It is enough if we play the piccolo and not the bass in the world orchestra." He returned to Prague on 6th December. His deputy, Dr. Clementis, and many of his friends, came to welcome him home again. When I saw him step out of the plane, I could not help thinking, simply how good it was to have him with us again.

He took a short rest, and, born fighter that he was, as soon as any of the principles in which he believed were in danger, he began fresh activity on the home front. At the beginning of January we started a new membership drive together for the United Nations Association, which without doubt was his favourite child. We had co-operated in this work since his election as President of the W.F.U.N.A. in 1946, and after my return to Prague in 1947 he decided to entrust me with his campaign for the United Nations Association, since his private secretaries were already overburdened with work. His popularity among the Czech people was higher than ever. In a film news-reel he said: "If you do not know the address of the United Nations Association write to me and I'll send you the application form." The result was remarkable. Thousands and thousands of letters poured in, many of them containing anything up to several hundred names. Whole schools, factories and political organisations of all shades joined because Masaryk asked them to join.

Between the making of the Czech and English versions of a film prepared for W.F.U.N.A. we chatted while Masaryk smoked a cigarette. I asked him how he liked the imaginary interview in the New Year's issue of the Communist daily for Czechoslovak youth, *Mlada Fronta*, whose writer invented a conversation between Masaryk and his Communist Under-Secretary, Dr. Clementis, which went something like this:

Masaryk—"Whenever I arrive from the States Clementis comes to welcome me at the airport. I ask him, 'Is everything all right?' and he says 'Everything is O.K. chief'. Then I say, 'I know you, you rogue, everything is O.K. because there are a few more Communists in the Ministry than when I left; but never mind, I shall send a nice anti-Communist Minister to Communist country, and we shall be square again'."

(At that time, at any rate the Communist press entertained no illusions about Masaryk's standpoint!)

Masaryk at my question, looked at me, a smile playing round the corners of his mouth, and said confidently: "I should prefer them not to print such silly things, but between ourselves, it is just as they say. . . ."

The film Masaryk was making was actually an appeal to support the United Nations idea, which was very deeply rooted in his heart. It is worth while reading in this appeal what were his thoughts at the beginning of the year 1948, destined to be the last year of his fruitful life. If you read them with understanding, then you will realise that Masaryk sensed what was coming. He said:

"May I wish you friends of the United Nations health, prosperity, lack of fear and a lot of human understanding. I take every

opportunity given me to talk about and plead for the United Nations Associations.

"It is your organisation, people of New York, London, Moscow, Paris and Prague—it is a great organisation of the people for a great cause: lasting peace. Without the United Nations we would be almost finished and our civilisation could easily perish.

"I know its shortcomings, I know its failures, but I also know and I wish to emphasise it to-day, its success and its possibilities.

"I, as President of the World Federation, want to know what you think of the labours in Lake Success and Flushing Meadows. Are you satisfied? If so, tell me why—and with what? Are you dissatisfied? Tell me why—and with what? There will be no better clearing house for constructive thought and action, once our Federation becomes strong, energetic and efficient. It is up to us, so-called 'little people'—and I proudly claim membership in that great mass of thinking and working citizenry.

"Come on, join us, let's criticise together, let's make suggestions together, let's insist on being heard—and actions are bound to follow.

"It is going to be a hard year—but we of the United Nations Federations do not despair, we have faith and we need you all to reinforce our endeavours. Please, let the year 1948 be a great milestone for our Federation. We can shape our own future if we get together—*please!*

"God bless us and keep us.

**"TRUTH SHALL CONQUER IF WE GIVE IT A CLEAR CHANCE!"**

That was the English version of the film, expressing clearly his vision of a difficult, dangerous future, and his determination to get the world together again to save civilisation.

In the Czech version of the film Masaryk said: "Medical science and scientists are discovering new, and I should even say miraculous, medical treatment, such as penicillin or streptomycin. In international politics there are no miraculous chemicals or herbs. There is only hard, patient work. We must trust each other and love each other. The best way to achieve this is through the United Nations, by supporting all the positive and fighting all the negative in international life. I beg you to help me to do so—really I badly need your help, and I want to thank you very much in advance. . . ."

Masaryk took off his glasses and looked into the camera, that is from the screen into the audience, just for a second or two, with his kind, sincere, honest smile.

Before we left his study, I noticed on a cabinet a group of dolls—one a resemblance of Mr. Churchill with his cigar, and another of a photographer taking a snap of him. Masaryk came to me

and said how much he liked it, because it was a gift from a twelve-year-old girl, who had made it specially for him. He knew her name, age and the school she went to. Perhaps this was his way of showing that there was no iron curtain in Masaryk's office in the Czernin Palais.

Soon afterwards the film was on show, and an article appeared in his favourite daily paper, *Svobodné Noviny*, briefly entitled "Smile". It was based on a letter sent in by a reader to say that the look he gave the public was too short. "We needed at least thirty seconds of it—thirty seconds of that wonderful, human, encouraging smile!"

I pointed out the article to Masaryk. He said:

"Of course I read it—and I hate it. . . . To-day they make me a god, and to-morrow they will kick me!" I could make no reply to that. I felt that the man who gave so much encouragement and love was very lonely.

Later in January Masaryk was given an honorary degree in philosophy at the University of Brno, which was named after his father. His speech was considered to be one of the best he had ever made. He dealt with the international, as well as the internal, crisis, and his approach to the problem was more that of a physician than of a philosopher, a balm in that time of gathering clouds, which he tried to disperse.

Many of the letters sent in for application forms for membership in U.N.A. asked Masaryk to put an end to the Communist terror. One suggested: "Merge the Czech Socialist and the Catholic Party, become their Chairmao, and there will again be peace and safety in our beloved country. We will follow you." A letter signed by a group of post-office officials ran "You have our complete trust, you are the only man who can stop the Communist threat to our independence, supported by Stalin and his Bolsheviks." We ensured that every single letter was answered. Those who applied for more than fifty entry forms received individually written letters signed by Mr. Masaryk personally, which meant dozens of signatures every day. He read many of the more interesting letters himself, so that he knew just how people were feeling. One day he said to me: "I think we ought to cut it down a bit—you might soon need me for something else." I was left puzzled. The letters we sent out circulated widely, and were even exhibited, bringing Masaryk into contact with more people than ever. When I heard that he was considering the possibility of standing at the next election campaign for the first time as a party politician, I thought I understood what his remark to me had meant. He felt that he would have to stand as a Social Democrat, as he was the only personality who would be able to guarantee the independent policy of that party from

Communist influence, thus securing its survival. I have reason to believe that this decision—not an easy one for an individualist as staunch as Jan Masaryk—was taken in conformity with the plans of Dr. Beneš.

Jan Masaryk had lately accepted more invitations to make public speeches, and my opportunities of discussing public opinion, and the subjects of his addresses, increased. He had a roar of applause when, standing beside Mr. Zápotocký, the Trade Union leader, he told a conference of factory delegates who were there to discuss raising output and improving working morale: "My opinion is that people should be told the truth under all circumstances. They always find it out in the end, but the search delays them most!" That was a neat way of attacking the withholding of certain information by some sections of the press, and the unfounded optimism of the official press agency in economic and other matters.

A few days afterwards he stood up in open revolt against the hysterical propaganda cries of the Communists, who branded every non-Communist as a "reactionary" and "bourgeois". While speaking to the war veterans and the liberated political prisoners Masaryk said: "If anyone asks where I stand and what I am, I want to say that I am a reactionary and a bourgeois and I am proud of it!" There was complete silence and Masaryk continued: "Reaction, that comes from the latin word 'reagere', to react, to react against evil; that is what I am trying to do. And 'bourgeois'—the French citizen—there cannot be anyone more decent than a free and democratic bourgeois!" With these words Masaryk dug a pit for all who misused those two innocent words to attack their opponents. He ended his address: "I do not care which party wins the elections. I am only concerned that the Czechoslovak Republic is victorious."

Experts estimated that his election campaign would cost the Communists at least seven to ten seats. It was even expected that his popularity would win some Czech Socialist votes for the Social Democrats, but the important issue was that the democratic forces would be strengthened. At that time Masaryk gave an after-lunch talk in the Czechoslovak Airmen's Club, where those who fought with the R.A.F. during the war held their regular meetings. Discussing the possibility of an armed conflict, Masaryk told the airmen in his typically outspoken fashion: "I know if there were another Battle of Britain, another fight for London, none of you would stop to finish the goulash you are eating."

Masaryk's attitude was as clear to the Communists as it was to everyone else. When people discussed who would be Dr. Beneš's successor should the President decide to retire, they always reached the same conclusion—that Jan Masaryk was the only

candidate who would represent the great majority of the Czech and Slovak people.

At a time when official sources and the Communist press in particular claimed that complete understanding had been reached within the Slav world, I read Masaryk's letter addressed to the Polish Foreign Minister, Modzelewski, in which Masaryk exposed the Polish revisionist propaganda and asked that the intimidation practised against the Czech population living partly in the Polish Teschen territory on the Polish side of the Tatra Mountains and in Germany, on territories newly acquired by Poland, be stopped immediately. He introduced a warning note in connection with the activities of the Polish Consul-General in Moravska Ostrava as they intervened in the Teschen problem. He even suggested in his letter, which was a private one, that the Polish official might become "*persona non grata*"—in other words his withdrawal might be requested.

The whole dispute was discussed a few days later in a session of the Foreign Committee of the Parliament. I accompanied Mr. Masaryk when he gave his report there on Czechoslovak relations with Germany. Several M.P.s from the Catholic and Czech Socialist parties were demanding an explanation of Soviet Russia's treatment of Czech claims for reparations and restitution, which was less favourable than that of the Western Allies as I have mentioned earlier. The documentary evidence in both instances (that is, in the Polish controversy, and the Soviet treatment of justified claims) was so convincing that even the Communist M.P.s were unable to speak in defence of Czechoslovakia's "sincere" Allies and brother nations.

There were other more civic occasions when personages opposing the Communist policy were quite outspoken in their condemnation. I was present when the retired Ambassador to Washington, Colonel Hurban, was decorated with the Slovak Medal of Liberation. Mr. Masaryk, who was a personal friend of Colonel Hurban's, was accompanied by his sister, Dr. Alice Masaryk. Dr. Lettrich, the President of the Slovak National Council, made the presentation. Dr. Clementis, the Communist Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and several personal friends and members of the family were there; also the well-known American writer, Miss Marcia Davenport. Dr. Clementis must have felt uneasy when remarks were made that Colonel Hurban, thanks to his long illness, was able to retire and take no part in a policy which made no one very happy. As he had been a close associate and friend of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, and a leading member of the Czech diplomatic corps, such a discussion was not without significance.

On occasions of this kind the Communists seemed to be quite

driven into a corner by the weight of the accusations made against them. They often made no attempt at all to defend themselves. That, if nothing else, should of course have served as a warning.

On the eve of the *coup d'état*, two weeks later, when I was working at the Conference on Germany of the three Foreign Ministers—Modzelewski (Poland), Simič (Yugoslavia), Masaryk—which had been arranged with surprising suddenness, Mr. Masaryk had the greatest difficulty in moderating the communiqué Mr. Modzelewski brought with him already prepared for issue when the talks had been concluded. From its tone it had obviously been prepared in the Kremlin. The Conference had been called on Polish initiative with the intention evidently of making wild accusations against the Western Allies, which the Czechoslovak representative could not possibly sign. The character of that meeting was admirably expressed by Mr. Masaryk, who declared at its end, in the presence of both Modzelewski and Simič, "*Comedia e finita*". They both took it as a joke, well aware that it expressed the true state of affairs, since the meeting had not been meant to settle anything but just to provide an opportunity for the signature of a document drawn up in Moscow.

Masaryk made it no secret that the dictatorship which the Communists were striving to achieve was a repudiation of everything he preached, believed, and worked and lived for; yet he was determined to stay as long as Beneš stayed.

I have already described the fate of Ruthenia. During the war Masaryk said in London that he wished to make it quite clear to the Hungarian Premier Kallay that Czechoslovakia would never recognise the theft of Ruthenia or the partial occupation of Slovak territory. He maintained the same attitude towards the Russian annexation of the same territory in Ruthenia, although the reality of the post-war situation gave him no chance to protest openly.

When he had expressed his political expectations at the beginning of the war, Masaryk had said he was convinced that his fatherland could not be saved by an "ism", neither Fascism nor Bolshevism, pan-Germanism nor pan-Slavism!

He soon gave up the idea that Czechoslovakia could be a bridge between the East and the West. Officially it was explained that Soviet Russia did not need Czechoslovakia to form the bridge, but the real reason was that he was afraid it would only lead to her disadvantage, or exploitation, by her stronger ally. He told his friends what he thought about it in a joke.

"I don't like the idea of a bridge," he said. "A bridge is used not only by people, but also by horses. If they leave a mess behind I would have to clear it up!" His conclusion was "No bridge, and no Iron Curtain. . . ."



Masaryk was expecting me when I saw him in his bedroom in the morning on Monday, 23rd February. I had spoken to him on Sunday afternoon on the telephone and explained that there were some urgent matters to be dealt with. It rather surprised me that he sent his personal servant down to my office to accompany me. There must have been very few people he trusted. Masaryk looked very worried and disheartened—it is no use pretending otherwise. He had realised long ago that his attempts to co-operate with the Communists were a complete failure, but now he knew for sure to what an extent he had been betrayed. He was still far from well, and his voice was hoarse.

We talked of the Action Committee. Masaryk said there was no power which could stop them in their work.

We then discussed the situation in the Information Section, and Mr. Masaryk promised to have a word with Klinger, my Communist colleague, who since the outbreak of the crisis had assumed the duties of head of the section. The real chief, Mr. Chmelař, was pushed completely into the background, and in fact was shortly afterwards "retired" by the Action Committee. Mr. Klinger was receiving daily instructions from Mr. Clementis, who received him each morning, from Dr. Borek, the Communist Chief of the Political Section, and also from Dr. Hajdů, who was in charge of a special department dealing with German questions. I told Masaryk what had happened about the circular telegram, and he signed the original copy, which I had with me, at once. He was pleased that Dr. Beneš's decision to insist on a parliamentary Government was made known to our diplomatic representatives, and from official sources. The general situation, however, was giving him great concern, and he foresaw a difficult time ahead.

"You remember what I told you when you were pushing through the recruiting campaign for the United Nations Association?" I had not forgotten his remark. "I think we ought to cut it down a bit—you might soon need me for something else." Now I really knew what it meant.

"Were you expecting things to be as bad as they are now?" I ventured to ask.

"I had no illusions," said Mr. Masaryk. "As it stands now, everything depends on Beneš, and whether we shall be able to give him enough support. There are still a few decent fellows left who are standing by, and together we'll see what can be done."

I told him about the ban imposed early that morning on travel abroad and suggested that steps should be taken to exempt Foreign Office service passports from the Ministry of Interior order that no one could leave the country without a permit from the security police.

"There is something else I want to tell you," I went on. "Our new Consul in Luxembourg, Mr. Weiner, is just about to leave Prague. We have to get the exit visa for him. Is there anything you want him to do in connection with Radio Luxembourg? If they are going to take over regular broadcasts for the World Federation of the United Nations Association—now is the time to settle it, before it's too late."

"I have been waiting ever since last summer to find an appropriate time to present the proposal to the Government, but we went from one crisis to another, and so I never got to it," Mr. Masaryk said: "Tell Weiner in my name that he is to contact Mr. Peulvey, the General Manager of Radio Luxembourg, to say I am still very interested in securing the radio station as the voice of the W.F.U.N.A. and that he will hear from me as soon as we get down to normal work again."

When I left him Mr. Masaryk said: "Come again at this time of the day whenever you need my help." He shook my hand, without joking, perhaps for the first time since I had known him. I had no idea at that moment how soon I myself would be deprived of any possibility of carrying on our co-operation.

Two days later the formation of the new Government, or in more practical terms the replacement of the twelve Ministers who had resigned, not only completely changed the situation, but revealed clearly how little hope was left. Masaryk wanted to resign immediately. He suggested it in fact to Gottwald as early as Monday, when he spoke to him on the telephone after learning that the Secretariats of the Czech Socialist and of the Social Democratic Party had been occupied and searched by the police. The Prime Minister assured him, however, that the police "protection of the buildings" was only a temporary arrangement. Masaryk discussed his position with the President when he saw him on Saturday but was asked to remain in the Government as it would have been an ill-chosen moment to relinquish any point of vantage. He stayed, but it was hard for him to bear the knowledge that his name would be used to put a good face on villainy. "Now they can claim that even Masaryk is going with them," he said.

Masaryk spoke and acted in full sympathy with his colleagues who resigned from the Government. Gottwald and his accomplices knew it—and because they knew it, they should never have said that Masaryk was with them—with the "putsch-makers".

Their lie was so great that I want to illustrate how much he was against them. Though he was ill, suffering from acute bronchitis, as we all saw during the meeting of the Action Committee at the Foreign Ministry, he could also have gone to the

Government meeting in such a fateful time if he had wanted to support the Communists, but he did not.

The attempt by Dr. Drtina, the former Minister of Justice, to commit suicide in protest against the new Government, shocked Masaryk more deeply than any other event of that fateful time.

Masaryk's thought of resignation was always tempered by the realisation that as soon as he had given up his position in the Government he would be deprived of the last possibility of intervening on behalf of his most loyal supporters; he thought he would be able to avert even more dire results of the political debacle, and not the least of his considerations was the plight of President Beneš, who had carried the burden of his office alone at the time of Munich, while Masaryk was abroad. The idea of deserting him, or of acting against his wishes, seemed to Masaryk as incredible as the necessity of co-operating with people who were already making capital of his father's reputation, believing themselves secure from contradiction by the son.

There was one other way—to go abroad. This would have meant escape in more than one sense, not only physically from the new dictatorship, but morally from the distasteful duty he was forced to assume. He could expose the whole barbaric system if he went, and lead the new struggle for liberation; but Masaryk was not a man to run away, above all from a minority of his own Czech people. He postponed his final decision. The way would still not be closed when his task at home was over.

The Action Committee at the Foreign Ministry had completed the long list of officials who were to be dismissed as "reactionaries, and enemies of the new regime, many of them having disclosed State secrets". Masaryk was presented with the list of dismissals, but he at first refused to authorise it. The Action Committee, exercising the full power vested in them by the new Government, which had placed them above the law, was able to press its case. The wishes of the Minister were no longer of any account, and to refuse to sign would have meant resignation, which at that point would have served no one. Masaryk spoke to the Chief of the Administrative Section, and was informed that the officials dismissed by the Action Committee would go through the usual procedure of two months' leave before they were given a final month's notice. Perhaps before the eight weeks were over something could be done. . . . Masaryk signed.

When Masaryk decided to stay he hoped to put a brake on Communist violence. He knew that it was a gamble. Although it was part of his new role, it was impossible for him to remain completely silent. Before leaving to attend the first session of the "Re-born Government of the Re-born National Front", he said

to one of his intimate friends, in something of his old frank manner:

"During the last war I used to give our people at home advice to play at Schweik.<sup>1</sup> Now I have to do it myself I know how much I asked from them. Well, we'll see what can be done."

As soon as he appeared in the Government chamber, he was asked by representatives of the press what he thought of the new Government.

"*S touto rldjou si rldi zarlddou!*" was the answer. "With this Government I shall enjoy governing!" with an ironic smile. He waved his hand in a way that left no one present in any doubt of his real meaning. This reply was reproduced in all the newspapers, but without the accompanying sarcasm.

At the meeting Masaryk asked that provision should be made to prevent the dismissal of civil servants for purely political reasons. He was told without reserve that political allegiance was the only way of testing an employee's loyalty towards the new regime, and that no opposition would be tolerated from malcontents. This was a terrible defeat for him. He, who had been the kindest and most appreciative master, had to stand by and see his most loyal servants discarded and even punished unjustly.

Foreign journalists came to see him. *L'Ordre*, the French paper, asked for an interview, but was represented by André Simone, the notorious Communist writer, who knew what he was up to.

"What do you think of the Anglo-American-French declaration on recent events?"

"It is very easy to make declarations. . . ."

"How was the change of Government carried out?"

"Without bloodshed. Our people are and will remain democratically minded, and this is why I believe in them and love them. I have always gone with the people and I shall continue to do so."

Well said and even better thought; but when it was printed as "Mr. Masaryk's View" in *L'Ordre*, in U.S.A. and all over the world, with some alterations—words left out and so on, it gave a different impression, thanks to Mr. André Simone.

News came in that Czechoslovak Ambassadors abroad had resigned. Masaryk envied them. With each day he was being driven further back into a corner.

There was one person in Czechoslovakia whom Masaryk could trust and who was neither responsible to the present regime nor under its legislation. The American writer, Marcia Davenport. Her novel, *The Valley of Decision*, was an excellent portrayal of Czech emigrants in America, and was linked with

<sup>1</sup>Schweik is the hero of the well-known book, *The Good Soldier Schweik*, by Karel Hasek. He defeats his oppressors by his ability to bluff and his disarming naiveté.

events that took place in Czechoslovakia before and at the beginning of the war.

Miss Davenport came to Prague before the actual crisis arose.

I met Marcia Davenport in Colonel Hurban's flat when he was decorated in the presence of Mr. Masaryk. She stayed in Prague throughout the crisis, but left the country rather hurriedly on Sunday on the plane to London. The same day Mr. Masaryk drove to Lány, some twenty miles from Prague. It was 7th March, and the ninety-eighth anniversary of the birth of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk. His son spent quite a long time at the grave-side of his parents.

On Tuesday morning Mr. Masaryk, accompanied the new Polish Ambassador, Mr. Olszewski, to Sezimovo Usti, the President's country home, where the Envoy presented his credentials. Several people present noticed that Jan Masaryk, though trying hard, was not in the good mood he usually enjoyed when visiting the President. After Mr. Olszewski had left, Mr. Masaryk stayed on. He had a long talk with the President and returned to Prague in the afternoon. The patient efforts the two statesmen had made to mitigate the effects of the landslide were seen to be unavailing, and their discussion was extremely grave. Some insight into Jan Masaryk's frame of mind has been given by Mr. Lev Sychrava, a journalist of high repute and a long-standing and close associate of both Masaryk's and of Dr. Beneš. When he spoke with the President several weeks later, Dr. Beneš said that during their meeting Masaryk had displayed signs of acute anxiety.

Back in the Czernin Palais he was awaited by his secretary and received some visitors, among them the Press Attaché from the Czechoslovak Embassy in London, Dr. Pavel Kavan. At the beginning of the crisis Dr. Kavan had sent a telegram to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanding the immediate re-organisation of the morning press summary edited by a Foreign Affairs official and transmitted by Radio Prague for the information of the diplomatic and consular staff abroad. The telegram suggested that these broadcasts were reflecting discredibly on the Ministry. This view would have been difficult to substantiate since the broadcasts were no more or less than a reproduction of the main features of the day's papers, and gave equal space to the organs supporting each party. One could only suppose that it was the free and uncensored character of this channel of information on current affairs which was giving Dr. Kavan concern. The arrival of the telegram had been the signal for Mr. Klinger to arrange with the Communist management of Prague Radio that Mr. Zink, the official in question, was forbidden to enter the building. His place was taken by a young Communist, chosen

by Mr. Klinger, called Klima. It little mattered that he had never before seen a microphone or written an article.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Masaryk, who was in possession of these facts, must have found it difficult not to show the young would-be diplomat the door!

After Dr. Kavan had left, Mr. Masaryk suggested his secretary should retire for the night. The light in his private apartment on the third floor of the Palais was not switched off. It was still burning when his life came to its sudden end between one and two o'clock in the early hours of the next day.

Very few people know with certainty what was the immediate cause of Masaryk's death. His friend, who escaped from Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1948 and is now in Britain, holds the confirmed opinion that the Minister took his own life. He told me quite resolutely, when I pointed out to him all the sensational stories being circulated about Masaryk's death:

"Yes, I have heard all versions of the murder—from his being thrown out of the window of a plane, or out of the window of the Czernin palace, or of being shot, to his shooting a score of others. I have heard of his being poisoned and lowered down from the window. I know of two dozen versions.

"When people asked me in Prague and I told them the truth, that when he stepped out of his bathroom window, he did so by his own decision, they told me:

"I know, it's your duty to say so'.

"I should be a bad disciple of Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, and a very bad friend of Jan Masaryk, if I did not tell the truth—and nothing but the truth.

"People who say that he was physically murdered—especially as they have no proofs, which they cannot have as there are none—show that they do not understand Jan Masaryk at all.

"Minister Masaryk, it is true, planned to escape. He had in fact two plans. But then he changed his mind because he believed that by this final act he would do more good for his own people in showing them that life is not so valuable that it must be kept for its own sake if those things that make life worth while disappear, and in showing them, too, that if necessary one must give one's own life in order that evil is exposed so that it can be fought against. He acted so for the sake of mankind, too—as a whole—because mankind reacts more to acts and deeds than to words. He told this to me and to others in those fateful days.

"It only remains to answer the question," continued Masaryk's friend, "when he decided to commit suicide.

"This happened after General Svoboda had insulted his father by saying that, were he alive, he would have approved of the

<sup>1</sup>He has since been appointed press attaché in Berne

present Government. That happened on Saturday, the 6th, in the Old Town Square, when Jan Masaryk received a decoration given to his father in memoriam. I was there with him.

"When we returned in his car, he was silent all the way back. When we reached his room, he went to the table on which lay the plaster cast of the hand of his father. He stood there for a while and then said: 'Švejkovina je u konce' ('Schweik behaviour has come to an end'). I do not know whether it was intentional or not, but he went to his bedside table and from it took his copy of the *Good Soldier Schweik*, closed it and put it on the table which stood at the window. On the bedside table there remained only the family Bible.

"The next day, he went to Lány, to his father's grave, where he stood longer than usual. . . .

"When on Monday he told me that Gottwald had sent a message that on Wednesday he should come half an hour sooner to the parliamentary building, because they were going to be filmed before and during the presentation of the new Government to the National Assembly, he said: 'To jistě. . . . Tam už nepůjdu. . . .' ('Certainly . . . but I shall not be going there any more. . . .') And, as always, he kept his word. . . .

"If that is not enough, I could tell you many other things—what he did and what he said. If anyone asks me again: 'Was it a murder?' my answer will be: 'YES—not physical, but most certainly a spiritual murder!'

"His end—and I repeat it—was a deliberate, premeditated, carefully thought-out act. Life, which was his most loved and precious possession, was the only thing he could sacrifice to show his disagreement, the only clear way to show his protest, a gesture of warning to the outside world. It was the act of a man who so much loved life that he sacrificed his own in order that others might see the value of it and guard it," said Dr. Masaryk's friend. I have known him long enough to accept his explanation as the only one given until now with authority and responsibility.

In the light of this statement the official Communist explanation that Masaryk had taken his life after "receiving disapproving telegrams from Britain and United States cannot be entertained for a moment. This theory rests on the assumption that he agreed with the new Government, but there is ample evidence to show that this was not the case; and no statesman of Masaryk's standing would be influenced so far by a couple of telegrams, whatever their content.

It is confirmed from several sources that Masaryk did intend eventually to leave by air. He had also ordered a great deal of his personal correspondence and documents to be burned. Some of them in fact had been disposed of immediately after the

outbreak of the crisis, as a precautionary measure, not to protect himself but his friends and colleagues, as well as ordinary folk who were in the habit of writing and freely expressing their opinions to him. He almost certainly stayed in the Government at the wish of Dr. Beneš, and he committed suicide when he realised that his sacrifice of himself, not to mention that he had risked bringing discredit in the eyes of the world on an honoured name, were to no purpose.

After the crisis he had sent two messages to Sir Bruce Lockhart, making clear his reasons for remaining in the new Government. These were borne out, as I have mentioned, by his subsequent statements and his attempts to help his supporters. Did he intend to send another message, given time, before his death, to ensure that his motive was fully understood?

I remember Masaryk once saying that every weapon and any means used to fight the Germans was justified. Now he knew that the responsibility for what had happened rested partly with a certain proportion of his Czech people, and he could not bring himself to fight them with the weapons he had advocated against the Germans.

In his room, beneath the still burning light, lay an open copy of a family Bible, in which two verses were underlined:

"But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

"Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians v, 22-3).

Before he died Jan Masaryk surely thought of his father and his immortal work. In his book *Suicide*, T. G. Masaryk had condemned suicide and he himself described the mission of this work as follows:

"With this book I have said that life without belief loses certainty and strength—with this I have said everything."

Jan Masaryk greatly loved his father. His loyalty to his father's ideals was well-known. He would not ignore his father's preaching against suicide, and if one of his last acts was to study those verses from the Bible, neither had he lost his belief. The force that finally drove him to suicide was therefore overwhelming. Among his other hopes was that of saving and maintaining at least some of the links with the West—none could do it if not he. In this he had been cheated, too. After the crisis he was virtually a prisoner, watched at every step, and the direction of his Ministry had been taken completely out of his hands by Dr. Clementis, Dr. Borek and Dr. Hajdů. He had no possible opportunity for influencing foreign policy in any respect



Whatever the manner of Masaryk's end, the logical conclusion of the cause and effect of his death must be the same. Spiritually he was murdered by those who had brought this suffering on himself and his nation. His death was an explanation for the world. That it was understood is best expressed in the words of a British member of Parliament:

"The message of Masaryk has got home.  
Being dead, he yet speaketh."

The statement issued by Mr. Attlee on the night of 10th March was explicit. It read:

"The name of Masaryk is one that free men will always honour. I had known Jan Masaryk for many years and I recall to-day the firm stand he made against Nazi oppression. His death has come as a great shock.

"He was essentially a lover of freedom and it may well be that he could not endure to live in the suffocating atmosphere of totalitarianism when all that he had striven for was being ruthlessly destroyed."

## Report to U.N.O.

*"If the accusations contained in the letter of the Chilean representative should be found to be true, the world might as well face the crisis to-day, rather than two, three or five years later. More delay in facing realities does not help."*

MR. TINGFU F. TSIANG, (China), 31st March, 1948, as President of the United Nations Security Council.

THE TRAGIC death of Jan Masaryk created a deep impression all over the world. The news travelled far and wide and had the effect of writing in the sky; the writing spelled a danger signal.

"His name and that of his father will always live in the affectionate memory of the British people," said the British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Bevin. Wherever a man of influence spoke he added another testimony to the magnitude of the loss the world had suffered.

There was one man for whom the news of Jan Masaryk's death brought a responsibility almost without parallel in the sphere of international diplomatic life. This was Dr. Jan Papánek, Czechoslovakia's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Organisation and a close associate and collaborator of Jan Masaryk.

The very same day Jan Masaryk's death was announced, Dr. Papánek declared at a press conference in Lake Success that Mr. Masaryk, before returning to his own country from the meeting of the Plenary Assembly of U.N.O. some three months ago, had given him a serious warning of the possibility of an early attempt to enslave Czechoslovakia and bring her under complete domination of the Soviet Union.

"Mr. Masaryk's wish was not that premature action should be taken," said Dr. Papánek to the somewhat surprised newspaper correspondents, "but to seek the help of U.N.O.<sup>1</sup> should he or Dr. Beneš be suddenly out of office.

<sup>1</sup>In this chapter I intend to describe at length certain U.N.O. documents to give the reader the chance of drawing his own conclusions as to the effectiveness and influence of the United Nations Organisation and its associated bodies. I should like to draw the reader's attention to Jan Masaryk's appeal on behalf of U.N.O. quoted in the previous chapter.

"Mr. Masaryk is now dead and Dr. Beneš is in fact a prisoner of the new regime," went on Dr. Papánek, "and these are circumstances under which I am pledged to speak up and expose what has happened in my own country from the moment the Communist minority, supported by Soviet Russia, made its first attempt to overthrow the democratic regime." In accordance with these instructions given him by Mr. Masaryk, Dr. Papánek explained that he had formally requested the United Nations in a letter to the Secretary-General, Mr. Trygve Lie, to investigate through the medium of the Security Council the circumstances which had brought about Czechoslovakia's loss of integrity and the sudden end of her Foreign Minister.

The Secretary-General, on receiving Mr. Papánek's letter, called a conference of his legal advisers, together with the President of the Security Council, the Chinese delegate, Dr. Tsiang. They decided that Dr. Papánek's statement was not a governmental action and therefore could not be submitted to the Council unless it was sponsored by a member Government of the United Nations.

Two days later a letter from the Permanent Representative of Chile was delivered to the Secretary-General. It read:

"Sir,<sup>1</sup>

"The Government of Chile has noted that on 10th March Mr. Jan Papánek, Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia accredited to the United Nations, sent you a communication requesting that the Security Council should consider the events which had taken place in his country since 22nd February last on the grounds that they constitute a situation endangering the maintenance of international peace and security.

"In the said note Mr. Papánek says that the political independence of Czechoslovakia, a Member of the United Nations, has been violated by the threat of the use of force by another Member of the United Nations, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. He goes on to say that a minority in his country, encouraged and given promise of help by the Government of the U.S.S.R., usurped power by eliminating the constitutional system of Government, violating personal guarantees and trampling under foot the public liberties established by Constitution, in the manner described in his letter. He also says that this *coup* was effectuated successfully only because of 'official participation of representatives of the U.S.S.R. and the threat of the use of military forces of the U.S.S.R. in readiness on the north-west boundaries of Czechoslovakia' . . .

"Without wishing to give an opinion on the propriety of the step you have taken with regard to the Czechoslovak Representative's

<sup>1</sup>Circulated as document No. S-641 of the United Nations Security Council.

request, and without implying that I accept his status as a private individual and not the legitimate representative of his Government, as you have suggested, I have the honour on behalf of Chile, which I represent before the United Nations, on personal and direct instructions from the President of the Republic, to request you to refer the question raised by the Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia to the Security Council, for the purposes set out in that letter. . . .

"The Chilean Government considers that the responsible and authoritative accusation is of such a serious nature, that a mere reason of formality, such as the alleged lack of status of Mr. Papánek, cannot be allowed to prevent the institution whose specific task is to safeguard world peace and security, from making the necessary investigations to prove the truth of this accusation. If the events prove to be true—and everything seems to indicate that they are—it would mean that the world is again facing an exact repetition of the actions and methods which were employed by Nazi Germany in the years preceding the last war, and were its immediate cause.

" . . . In October last Chile was obliged to sever diplomatic relations with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and with Yugoslavia, because those countries were interfering in her internal affairs (trying to disrupt and hamper production of the basic raw materials such as copper and nitrates, which Chile exports to friendly countries) through the illegal revolutionary action of a national group working in their interest. The objects of this action, which coincide completely with those of her intervention in Czechoslovakia, demonstrate the extent and nature of the U.S.S.R.'s plans and prove that neither geographical situation nor greater or lesser degrees of strength or size, or a country's love of peace, or indifference to it, are factors which can enable a country to avoid becoming involved in a conflict such as a power like the U.S.S.R. might undertake. Thus the Chilean Government on that occasion most reluctantly felt obliged to extend its severance of relations to the CZECHOSLOVAK Government. . . .<sup>1</sup>

"Now that events have proved the rightness of the Chilean point of view and justified the true reasons which led my Government to take such steps, we wish to render homage to the noble Czech people—for whom we feel a deep admiration and respect—by supporting in our capacity as a Member of the United Nations the just demands made in their name by their permanent Representative to the United Nations.

<sup>1</sup>The reason for the severance of diplomatic relations in October 1947 with Czechoslovakia was that it would have been the only country of the "Soviet bloc" that still had representatives in Chile and would surely have been made to support the hostile activity of the Soviet and Yugoslav agents.

"I request you to communicate to the Security Council our petition that, in conformity with the Charter, my country be invited to participate in the discussion of this matter, when it is brought before the Security Council

"I have the honour to be, etc

"HERNAN SANTA CRUZ "

Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations

The Chilean Government, through its own experience with the subversive activities of the Communist and Moscow sponsored fifth column, had full understanding for the plight of Czechoslovak democracy. As the ruling stood, the Czechoslovak delegate was considered as a private person, and there was still, as it transpired, no other way of bringing Dr Papanek's letter to the official attention of the Security Council than by actually including it as part of an official representation on behalf of the Chilean Government.

It should not be forgotten that Dr Papanek undertook his first action in his full official capacity and was recalled, or dismissed, by telegraph, after the report of his action had reached Prague.<sup>1</sup>

The Chilean representative therefore addressed a further letter to the Secretary General,<sup>2</sup> inserting the text of Dr Papanek's presentation, which began with a recollection that he had discussed the development in Czechoslovakia with Mr Trygve Lie on 25th February, and had mentioned an eventual investigation by the Council. He continued

'To day I feel I can no longer postpone action without failing in my duty to my country and my terrorised, silenced and enslaved people.' Then followed a summary of developments in Czechoslovakia before and during the Communist *coup d'état*. The Chilean letter brought the whole to a close by requesting the Secretary General to circulate this note together with his earlier letter dated 12th March.

These communications were immediately confirmed by a cablegram<sup>3</sup> from his Excellency, Gabriel Gonzales Videla, President of the Republic of Chile, appointing Ambassador Hernan Santa Cruz for the discussion of the accusation brought before the Council by Chile relative to the events which have taken place in Czechoslovakia, which was considered by Mr Trygve Lie to be an adequate credential.

<sup>1</sup>Dr Papanek ignored the withdrawal of his credentials as he did not recognise the legality of the Communist self appointed regime.

<sup>2</sup>United Nations Security Council Document No. S-696 dated 16th March 1948

<sup>3</sup>U.N.O. Security Council Document No. S-698 dated 17th March 1948.

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Thus the rape of Czechoslovakia, for the second time<sup>1</sup> in ten years, was referred in an international forum and to the consciousness of the world. The Gottwald Government (as it liked to be described), in Czechoslovakia, appointed Dr. Vladimír Houdek, a diplomatist attached to its Washington Embassy, as its Permanent Representative to U.N.O. and Dr. Papánek, though elected by the Plenary Assembly as an official of several Commissions, became, by Czechoslovakia's action, a private person. The case of Czechoslovakia was to be discussed first at the 272nd meeting of the Security Council<sup>2</sup> on 22nd March, and the day was awaited with some expectancy as it was a moot point whether at the suggestion of the Chilean Government representative Dr. Papánek would be permitted to state the case of his native country in person.

When the meeting opened<sup>3</sup> the President invited the Chilean Representative to "take his place at the Security Council table" and requested Mr. Arce of the Argentine, who had sponsored Chile's written suggestion, to invite the ex-representative of Czechoslovakia to take a seat also in order that he could state the reasons which had caused him to write his accusation. Mr. Arce pleaded:

"In the name of the Argentine Republic, I wish to support this request. We believe that a frank statement of the facts will perhaps lead to an improvement of the relations between the great powers at this difficult juncture."

Soviet Russia had already made it known that she would oppose any discussion of the subject and that as one of the permanent members and powers who had the right of veto she was prepared to exercise it at the earliest opportunity and sweep the whole case into oblivion. Therefore the Argentine Representative stated:

"The attitude adopted by the Soviet Union in this matter seems to make it more necessary than ever that the situation should be clarified so that any misunderstanding that may have arisen can be removed."

Mr. Ignatieff, the Representative of Canada, supported the Argentine request, but Mr. Tarasenko, on behalf of the Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup>In 1939 after 15th March, President Beneš sent a protest to the League of Nations against the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. The Secretariat refused to accept the protest as Dr. Beneš, who was at that time in exile in U.S.A., was considered as a private person. The Soviet Ambassador in London, however, Mr. Maisky, informed him that he had been instructed by his Government to present the protest in the name of the U.S.S.R. The matter was not dealt with after all owing to the outbreak of hostilities. It is without dispute that the action of Dr. Papánek and the Chilean Government has an analogy with that of Beneš and the U.S.S.R. This time the U.S.S.R. took another view of such an action.

<sup>2</sup>U.N.O. Security Council Document No. S-P.V. 272, dated 22nd March 1948.

<sup>3</sup>The Security Council has eleven members then, Argentine, Belgium, Canada, China, Colombia, France, Syria, Ukrainian S.S.R., U.S.S.R., U.K., U.S.A. The five Great Powers are permanent members and have the right of veto.



S.S.R., said that he objected categorically to the proposal of Argentine "that we should invite such a person as Papánek to take part in the work of the Security Council on this question". He gave the following reasons:

(1) In general it could not be accepted that a serious body could consider so-called facts alleged against his own country by a traitor to that country.

(2) A serious body should not listen to a person defaming his own people and showing lack of respect for that people.

(3) Such a hearing would not strengthen the cause of the United Nations.

When Mr. Gromyko, on behalf of U.S.S.R., asked for permission to speak, it was clear that the statement the Council was to hear would determine the fate of the case, even if the majority of those present were in favour of Mr. Papánek's appearance.

Mr. Gromyko, a fairly young, energetic representative of the typical Soviet diplomatic school, came forward not only with an objection to the case being raised at all but with a demand that "such statements should not only not be encouraged but should be condemned whenever and by whomsoever they are made!"

As no other speakers were announced, the President, Mr. Tsiang, suggested a vote on the Chilean proposal that Mr. Papánek, former permanent representative of Czechoslovakia, should be invited to take part in the discussion. The proposal was adopted by nine votes to two and Dr. Papánek took his place at the Security Council table.

I saw Dr. Papánek last in the summer of 1947 at the celebration of United Nations Day where Mr. Masaryk was the speaker. He brought Dr. Papánek with him, and after giving his address, short and witty as usual, he suddenly paused, raised his hand and pointed out a man sitting in the first row.

"There is a man," he said, "who could tell you a better story than I for the simple reason that he knows much more about the subject than I do!" With these words Dr. Papánek was introduced, and when Masaryk added, "I have known him long enough to know what to think of him", he certainly had in mind their long years of co-operation before, during and after the war, when Dr. Papánek was one of the leading representatives of Czechoslovakia on the American Continent.

To-day, in the Security Council chamber, Papánek, a man who had the confidence of Masaryk, stepped forward to give a picture of a tragedy which affected not only his great friend Masaryk but also their common fatherland and nation. His story will become

part of Czechoslovak and European history. I intend to quote at some length from his speech, for I feel his interpretation of the subject deserves wide publicity. Together with the following debate it provides an excellent opportunity for insight into the procedure of the U.N.O. Security Council. Dr. Papánek said:<sup>1</sup>

"Nine years ago, almost to the day, the case of Czechoslovakia, occupied by force by Germany, was brought to the attention of the League of Nations. At that time the protest made by President Beneš was cursorily dismissed as one presented by a private individual. To-day the Security Council of the United Nations is giving me the opportunity of a hearing."

Here Dr. Papánek mentioned his letter of 10th March 1948 addressed to the Secretary-General in which he requested the Security Council to investigate the Communist *coup* and continued:

"In order to understand the situation it is necessary to retrace events which foreshadowed present development. The difficulties with which the Czechoslovak people had to cope after the war to preserve the last vestiges of democracy were similar to those which the nation had time and again met in its strategically important geographic position in the very heart of Europe. . . .

"They fought as advance guards—and I use the term advisedly—for freedom, humanity, democracy and social justice. 'Truth will prevail' was always their motto and remained unchanged for the founder of the Republic, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, as it had been for Jan Hus more than five hundred years ago.

"The Czechoslovak Constitution was based on these ideals, and President Beneš had, therefore, every right to say, in his speech to the Congress of the United States in 1943, that when victory in the war was achieved, his nation would again reconstruct its age-old homeland quickly and successfully, and that it would remain faithful to the democratic way of life.

"A tradition of national history cannot change overnight. The spirit of a nation, annealed through the centuries, cannot be changed beyond recognition in the space of a few hours, days or weeks. That such a change took place—as it seems it did—was not due to the will of the people, as it is claimed, but due to the violence of a Soviet-supported Communist minority, and was a fissure in the structure of international peace. **THIS, GOD GRANT, I SHALL PROVE TO THE REPRESENTATIVES ON THE SECURITY COUNCIL.**"

Dr. Papánek described at this point the work done by the Beneš Government in exile and stated that the Soviet-Communist plan to get complete control of Czechoslovakia was laid before the war

came to its end. Unexpected difficulties came into the open when governmental representatives were preparing to take over the administration of the territories liberated by the Red Army. He said:

"A Czechoslovak delegation was sent by the London Government to Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, but the Soviet Union military command made it impossible for this delegation from the first moment to get in touch with the population, and Soviet officers of the N.K.V.D.—that is Soviet Secret Police—began to organise meetings of the Carpatho-Russian population on 6th November, 1944, in order to press them into accepting the inclusion of their country into the Soviet Union, although there was no doubt, whatsoever, that Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia was legally an integral part of the Czechoslovak Republic.

"The Red Army in the meantime had already begun a recruiting drive and Czechoslovak officers, whose task it was to carry out mobilisation orders, were arrested. The Commander of the particular Soviet Union Army—Commissar Mechlis—declared that the Czechoslovak delegation and the military command of the Czechoslovak army were acting against the interests of the Soviet Union. On 11th November 1944 the Soviet military organs prohibited the Czechoslovak delegation to attend a meeting of the National Committees, and disbanded them forcibly, disregarding that they were formed spontaneously and were unquestionably in favour of keeping Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia in the Czechoslovak Republic. Members of such committees were expelled to Russia, and every trace of them was lost.

"By such measures, and with the direct intervention of the Soviet Union army, Ruthenia was separated from the Czechoslovak Republic, although a great majority of the population wanted Ruthenia to remain an integral part of Czechoslovakia.

"A few months later, in February 1945, President Beneš and certain members of the Government were asked to go to Moscow before returning home. The question was debated for a long time whether to go and try to come to an agreement with the Moscow Communist group led by Gottwald and Fierlinger, or refuse to go and risk the creation of a new Government there, which would exclude the London Government completely as had happened in the case of Governments of other countries that had been established in London during the war. The Government felt that the friendship of the people at home for the Russians bound them to go.

"Upon their arrival in Moscow, their basic programme for post-war Czechoslovakia was shattered. The so-called Košice Programme was hastily imposed by the Communists who threatened that unless that Programme was accepted the London Government

would never be permitted to return to Czechoslovakia, 'the train would not run' to take them home, said Ambassador Fierlinger. It is true that President Beneš remained in office and that Premier Stalin repeated the assurances he gave him in 1943, when the Treaty of Friendship was signed."

Here Dr. Papánek pointed out, that at that time the Moscow Communists did not dare to eliminate President Beneš, for they were not certain of their reception at home without him. President Beneš told him himself that for quite some time, and especially in Košice, armed Soviet soldiers kept him incommunicado. At that time it was still hoped that the Government agreed upon in Moscow was nothing but an interim Government which was to serve until Prague had been liberated. In Prague leaders of the Czech National Council, who worked for the liberation and had fought the Germans throughout the occupation, were empowered by the Government in Košice to be its representatives. At the next opportunity they were to be included in the new Cabinet as representatives of the home-front. It was all meant very well, but Dr. Papánek was now able to reveal what had actually happened. He said:

"However, Soviet Ambassador Valerian Alexandrovitch Zorin, who accompanied the returning Government from Moscow, insisted in a note that the Soviet Government demanded the elimination of all leaders of the Czech National Council because they were 'unreliable'. General Kutelvasr, who was in charge of the military revolt in Prague against the Nazis, was removed. Professor Prazak, Chairman of the Council, was questioned by the N.K.V.D., and practically the entire presidium of the Council was removed. No reconstruction of the Košice Government took place.

"While President Beneš was held incommunicado in Košice, Jan Masaryk, in San Francisco at the United Nations Conference on International Organisation, was subjected to a great pressure and threats from Mr. Molotov, that his recommendations with Masaryk would be broken if he refused to do his bidding.

"In order to keep the friendship of the Soviet Union, it was also necessary to make serious sacrifices in the economic field. Unlike the Allied armies of the Western Powers, the Red Army insisted upon having all its expenses paid by the Czechoslovak Government and the economic abuse continued even after the direct consequences of war had been settled. One such commitment that the Government was confronted with was the taking over of the radium mines in Jachymov by the Soviet Union, the control of which was promised to it by the overly-generous Zdenek Fierlinger without the knowledge of his Government. Later the Government was forced to give its formal ratification to the deal

and since that time no Czechoslovak authority has been allowed to enter the mines or to receive any information concerning them. The armed guards around the mines wear Czechoslovak uniforms, but are of foreign nationality. In Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad) close to the borders of Germany where the United States and Soviet Union Zones adjoin, there are several hotels, restricted to the exclusive management and use of the Soviet Army, to which, from time to time, high-ranking Soviet military and government officials come to stay."

These facts were listed by Dr. Papánek, because they had direct bearing on the events of February 1948. There were many others, which also had a bearing on what happened in February. There was, for instance, a perfect parallel between the planned movement of Red Army troops from Austria and Hungary across Czechoslovak territory during the general election time in 1946, which was averted at the last moment by a strong protest in Moscow—and a similar movement of troops in February 1948, which had not the same publicity as the previous case.

Before taking up the development in February during the *coup d'état*, Dr. Papánek mentioned that a similar *coup* was attempted a few months earlier, that is in November 1947. At that time the Communists built up a case against the Slovak Democratic Party in an effort to prove that this party's leaders were accomplices of an attempt to destroy the Republic. That attempt failed, and also the Social Democratic Party, until November 1947 very subservient to the Communists under the leadership of Fierlinger, turned away from them and ousted Fierlinger as chairman.

"On that very day," stated Dr. Papánek, "the Communists must have realised that their chances to secure supremacy by constitutional and parliamentary methods were definitely lost. From that day, too, the tension and dread increased until the fateful days of February.

"The entire so-called crisis began, when the Communist Minister of the Interior, Vaclav Nosek, refused to comply with the decision of the Council of Ministers to review and change the appointments of Communists only to the highest positions in the police of Prague. The other political parties could not accept this unconstitutional step and handed in their resignations. The Communists seized upon this pretext for the realisation of their long-premeditated plans and instructions.

"It is certain, that if this opportunity had not presented itself, it would have been made a little later but certainly before the general elections which were to be held in May. It was inevitable for the following reasons:

"Premier Gottwald proclaimed several months ago that the

Communists would get more than 51 per cent of the votes. Since it was then evident that they would not receive such a number of votes, Gottwald inferred that the *putsch* was already planned and prepared.

"Vaclav Kopecký, Minister of Information, speaking in Brno at a meeting on 15th January 1948, said in part:

"The situation has developed in such a way that it will be necessary to call for a national front of a somewhat new, regenerated form, in which the leadership must be taken by leftist progressive and socialist elements which want to lead the nation and which have a positive attitude toward socialist aims."

"That speech revealed the ways in which the Communists expected to achieve the 51 per cent majority.

"It has often been said by the Communists in Czechoslovakia that the *coup* was the expression of the will of the people. I affirm, that the people who took part in the strikes and demonstrations for the unconstitutional demands of Premier Gottwald were not only misled but actually forced to participate. . . . It is a well-established fact—and any investigation committee can prove beyond the shadow of doubt—that anyone who did not participate in the strike, set simultaneously for a noon hour all over the country, lost his or her job immediately and expected further punishment.<sup>1</sup>

"Participation in parades and demonstrations was also compulsory, and witnesses, here in the United States now, can attest to the fact that high officials and typists alike wept as they were forced to march under the Soviet flags.

"The channels of information, the press and the radio, were immediately put in the hands of the Communists, and no one but a Communist could broadcast—not even the President of the Republic. I know that he prepared one speech which the controlling powers refused to let him broadcast. It is almost superfluous to add that the public pronouncements of all non-Communist parties were forbidden."

Dr. Papánek then dealt with the question whether the Communist *coup* was directed from the Soviet Union.

"The *coup* was engineered by Gottwald, Fierlinger, Kopecký, Nejedlý, Slánský, and General Svoboda," he said. "All these, without a single exception, and others not mentioned here, spent the war in the Soviet Union, where they received the necessary training and precise instructions for their future actions.

"The *coup* was effected under Soviet as well as Czechoslovak flags; with Stalin's pictures; with the emblems of the Soviet

<sup>1</sup> I mentioned that this was the case, in Chapter Six, where I described that Foreign Ministry officials had to sign an attendance sheet at the meeting held during the strike hour to prove their participation

revolution, the hammer and sickle; and with the Soviet hymn in use together with the Czechoslovak. The Communist Party always uses them in any action of force, but when it wished to gain the votes of the Czechoslovak people in the free and secret election, it used only Czechoslovak emblems and symbols, openly and hypocritically.

"All economic and political institutions, newly introduced, have their pattern in similar institutions of the Soviet Union."

In this connection Dr. Papánek quoted a passage about political infiltration from the book *Speaking Frankly* by the former Secretary of State of the United States, James F. Byrnes, who wrote on page 306:

"The Charter of the United Nations pledges all members to refrain from the threat or the use of force against the territorial integrity or the political independence of any State. The definition is *not restricted to armed invasion*. It can mean coercion, pressure or subterfuge, such as political infiltration."

"In addition to indirect aggression or infiltration of the Soviet Union, there were several serious instances of direct intervention, such as the presence of Mr. Zorin in Prague in the time of the *coup*. The Deputy Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union came to Prague in the midst of a political crisis without the advance knowledge of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, and the President, Dr. Beneš—which is not customary. The reason of his visit—to control the deliveries and distribution of wheat and fodder shipments from the U.S.S.R.—needs not to be taken seriously, as he did not even make an attempt to discuss it with the Minister chiefly responsible for the transaction, that is, the Minister of Foreign Trade, Dr. Hubert Ripka."

Dr. Papánek then described a conversation between Prime Minister Gottwald and President Beneš, which was rather significant in this connection. He said:

"After Mr. Zorin's arrival, President Beneš received the Premier. After almost two hours of conversation, when Gottwald was ready to leave, the President, who had been already unofficially informed, asked, 'Have you nothing more to tell me to-day?' Gottwald answered: 'Nothing.' The President then asked: 'Not even that Mr. Zorin is in Prague?' And Gottwald answered: 'Yes, he is here.'

"The failure to mention the presence of such a high official of the Soviet Union," stated Dr. Papánek, "is one more proof of which country's interests Gottwald serves. This omission resulted in the President's refusal to receive Mr. Zorin at all."

Dr. Papánek referred to the letter President Beneš handed to the Premier on 25th February in answer to the demands of the Communist Party. The letter ended with the President's assertion,

that he founded his political work on the principles of parliamentary democracy, and that he could not take any other action without self-betrayal.<sup>1</sup>

"Can any thinking person believe," said Dr. Papánek, "that President Beneš could agree to the new Government without the greatest pressure, without duress, without the threat of the use of force? Can President Beneš, who studied democracy all his life, who worked for democracy, taught democracy, went into exile for democracy and gave his life for democracy, change overnight? . . .

"I categorically reject any suggestion that President Beneš is a free man. I reject any responsibility that he approved the new Gottwald regime or that he sanctioned his actions without having the greatest pressure put upon him.

"I believe that President Beneš would have resigned immediately if he were a free man. I know positively that on Saturday, 6th March 1948, the Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk, visited him in Sezimovo Ústí. I know that on that day the President said he was going to resign.

"I likewise reject categorically the supposition that the late Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, spoke the words he did during the last days except under the greatest pressure and duress. He could not make a move without the two special guards assigned to him after the *coup*. For myself, I cannot accept the official explanation of his death as suicide. I know that he planned to leave Czechoslovakia and begin to work all over again for a free Czechoslovakia."

Dr. Papánek went on describing the difficulties Masaryk had when coping with the necessity to satisfy U.S.S.R. and its elastic interpretation of the Treaty of Friendship of 1913, when he tried to avoid irreparable harm to his own country. After the unsuccessful attempt on Masaryk's life in September, when two other Cabinet members, Drtina and Zenkl, received identical parcels with Mr. Masaryk's, which were bombs intended to kill the recipients, Masaryk's position became even more difficult. Dr. Papánek stated that there was enough evidence to prove that the N.K.V.D. of the Soviet Union was involved in the bomb plot.

"Drtina, Minister of Justice, responsible for the investigation, was found on the sidewalk in front of his house in a critical condition shortly after the Communists took over in February," said Dr. Papánek, "and the official explanation was that he attempted suicide. Jan Masaryk was the second official suicide—Zenkl remains.

"These are the facts. I have witnesses to substantiate them. I have more facts:

<sup>1</sup>This letter was quoted in Chapter Six.



"I mentioned, that the threat of military force being used was made to support the *coup*. The threat was addressed to the President and I would ask the Security Council to hear President Beneš himself attest to the fact which forced him to proclaim that he had to accept the Gottwald dictatorship because he could not allow the terrible bloodshed which would otherwise result.

"I have learned that there were Soviet Army movements in Austria also, near the southern boundary of Czechoslovakia, as reported in the Swiss newspaper *Volksrecht*, on 20th February, by United Press. It said that 18,000 additional Soviet troops marched into Austria, of which 10,800 will be stationed in Dollersheim and the rest in Klosterneuburg—both very near the Czechoslovak boundary."

Dr. Papánek went on that press pictures were visible proof of Red Army participation in the Prague demonstrations during the crisis. Soviet officers participated in the arrests of non-Communist political leaders, and their agents worked in the Ministry of Interior, which controls the police and security troops. Soviet agents were also among the armed militia in the streets of Prague.

Dr. Papánek also produced evidence that the Communist *coup* was one step in the fulfilment of the Communist plan for world revolution. He declared that the Yugoslav General Maslarić, who also happened to be in Prague with the Soviet General Gundorov during the crisis, said on 26th February 1948 at the initial meeting of the executive board of the All Slav Committee.

"No one denies that the world is divided into two camps. The imperialist camp is led by the United States with the help of England and France, and the democratic camp is led by the Soviet Union, the Slav and non-Slav lands of people's democracy and includes all other oppressed nations which are struggling for their own freedom and independence. To the democratic camp also belong the American workers who are fighting against the lowering of their material standard of living, American farmers . . . American Negroes . . . and, in addition, the British, French and Italian workers and peasants. . . The democratic camp also includes the Greek, Indian, Malayao and Chinese people."

Dr. Papánek made his final appeal to the Security Council, to take up the matter of Czechoslovakia, because the existence of tyranny and oppression anywhere must be considered as a threat to international peace—as laid down in Article 34 of the Charter. He concluded

"I fought for my country's independence in World War I. I was called a traitor and condemned by local Austro-Hungarian authorities then. I worked with President Beneš during World

War II—and was called a traitor and condemned by the puppet Slovak Tiso regime a second time. My letter requesting the investigation of the *coup* in Czechoslovakia resulted in my being condemned as a traitor for the third time; this time, however, the condemnation came not from home, but from a responsible high official of a foreign country. My efforts from the day of the signing of the United Nations Declaration on 1st January 1942 for the purposes and principles of the United Nations are known to all of you and I declare solemnly that the success of the United Nations was my purpose in life. That I have lived to see Czechoslovakia's independence violated by our great ally, in whom we had faith, has been the greatest shock of my life's experience!

"With the faith that I have in the United Nations, I believe that they cannot and must not fail the freedom-loving people of Czechoslovakia, who are now terrorised, silenced and enslaved. The United Nations cannot and must not fail the rest of the freedom-loving people of Europe and the **WORLD WHOSE FREEDOM HAS BEEN TRAMPLED OR IS NOW IN PERIL.**"

There was complete silence in the Security Chamber when Dr. Papánek withdrew and this silence was not interrupted, until the President, Mr. Tingfu Tsiang, gave the word to the British Representative, Sir Alexander Cadogan, who said:

"I am sure that all members of the Security Council will wish to study and examine very carefully the statement to which we have just listened. . . . When we discussed the inclusion of this question on the agenda, the representative of the Soviet Union said that these charges are—and these are his words: 'pure invention', 'pure slander', 'absolutely unfounded', 'absolute absurdity'.

"So we have charge and counter-charge, and it must be the duty of the Security Council to endeavour to arrive at the **TRUTH!**"

Sir Alexander Cadogan agreed that only President Beneš himself could give an answer to what really happened during his interview with the Premier and what arguments the latter used to induce him to accept demands that were notoriously repugnant to him. Sir Alexander said:

"President Beneš could give us these, but since the recent *coup d'état* he does not appear to have any facilities for publicity. We cannot, I think, expect to get such direct evidence. But that does not relieve us of the responsibility of trying to form an estimate of the likelihood of the truth of these charges. Bland and bare denials are not, in this case, very convincing. We cannot be blind to what has been happening under our eyes during the past few years. Country after country on the confines of the Soviet

Union has succumbed to the rule of a ruthless Communist minority. The events of 1939 to 1941, the succession of violent changes of attitude toward the war made by Communist Parties in every country of the world, proved that these parties took their orders from Moscow. The circumstances and the technique are always the same. . . .

"Everyone remembers Mr. Vyshinsky's visit to Bucharest when by means of, to say the least, unorthodox methods he fastened the Groza Government on RUMANIA, leading finally to the enforced abdication of King Michael. . . .

"What happened in CZECHOSLOVAKIA had happened before in RUMANIA, BULGARIA, ALBANIA, HUNGARY and POLAND! In all these countries, in breach of solemn international pledges made at Yalta that free and democratic institutions would be established, all the parties but the Communist were gradually or suddenly wiped out. In a number of these countries Russian troops had been in occupation while the Communist minority seized and built up power. . . . Can it be believed that the Czech people would willingly have suppressed democratic freedoms to which ever since their liberation from the Austrian Empire they had attached such value? Can it be believed that a gallant nation like the Czechs, who made such a magnificent resistance to the Nazis, and whose airmen played so great a part in the Battle of Britain—can it be believed that such a people would give in unless some threat of overwhelming force had been brought against them? . . .

"Jan Masaryk made his last desperate sacrifice; he gave his life to prove to all the world that this change has been forced upon his nation, and President Beneš has so far made no declaration to his people or to the world, and meanwhile the propaganda of the new Czechoslovak Government tries to persuade the people that the Western Powers have come out in their true colours as the enemies of Czechoslovakia. . . .

"There are limits beyond which this tide must not advance and it must be dammed back.

"In judging this case we must be careful, scrupulous and objective, but above all we must be very careful that we be not too easily fooled." These were comments of the British Representative on Dr. Papánek's accusation.

Mr. Gromyko (U.S.S.R.) then took up the cudgels, objecting outright to the Chilean communication going on the Security Council Agenda. Its consideration would be "a gross intervention in the internal affairs of a member of the United Nations," he said. "It is no accident, therefore, that the statement of the venal cliques which are at present in power in Chile is used by the war-mongers, who have already warmed their hands around and

made a noise. They are attempting to raise the question in the reactionary and venal press, particularly in the United States. This campaign is heated still further by the statements of certain officials, including certain very highly placed persons. These individuals are attempting to make use of this unclean document in order still further to poison relations between States, above all between the great powers . . . in order to strengthen the war fever which is already afflicting certain circles in various countries, particularly in the United States."

Sir Alexander Cadogan pointed out that nobody had yet asked for intervention in matters of domestic jurisdiction in Czechoslovakia, but an allegation was made by the Government of Chile that the Soviet Union had intervened in the affairs of another State with the threat of the use of force.

"It is true," said Sir Alexander, "that the representative of the U.S.S.R. said that this charge is pure invention and gross slander, but that is no reply and I shall therefore give my vote in favour of including this matter on our agenda."

Mr. El Khouri, representative of Syria, Mr. Lopez of Colombia, Mr. Parodi of France (President of the Council), Mr. Nisot of Belgium and Mr. Austin of the United States made declarations to the same effect. The latter drew attention to the fact that part of the Soviet countercharge was the accusation of Mr. Papánek as a traitor, which of course had to be proved together with the other allegations against the United States, their personalities and press.

Finally, the request to put the case on the Agenda for discussion was granted by nine to two, the Soviet Union and the Ukraine voting against. Mr. Santa Cruz of Chile again took his place at the Security Council table. He put up a spirited defence of Dr. Papánek and underlined the fact that when Dr. Papánek sent his letter to the United Nations he was still a legal representative of a legitimate Government of Czechoslovakia. "Nothing but words of praise can be said about his past activity in all honesty, loyalty and from the highest motives," commented the Chilean delegate. He then explained that Chile would support the case, which had stirred opinion throughout the world, and asked that Dr. Papánek should be invited to supply the Security Council with more information.

That was the signal for a new debate in which Mr. Gromyko (U.S.S.R.) accused Chile of having no policy of her own and that politicians, particularly in the United States, were choking with hatred, or maybe fear, when they spoke about the Czechoslovakia of to-day! He said: "They try to cover up their own expansion with the old and well-known method of crying 'Stop thief!'"

The Chilean representative answered by recapitulating the

eleven points which formed the basis of Dr. Papánek's accusation, such as the cession of Ruthenia to U.S.S.R., threat of movements of Soviet troops on the eve of an election in Czechoslovakia, or Mr. Zorin's participation in the *coup*; he stressed the fact that many of these points were already established facts which required no further investigation, so that the seriousness of the accusation was already proved. He said, too:

"In judicial proceedings against a lunatic murderer, it is helpful to consult his record of similar crimes, executed by the same means and in similar circumstances. So, here, this international crime against the independence of Czechoslovakia provides a crushing argument as advanced by Sir Alexander Cadogan when he said, 'What happened in Czechoslovakia has previously taken place in Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland', and he went on to add, 'The circumstances and the technique were the same.'"

The delegates could not be accused of not using plain speech! Mr. Tsiang, who was presiding at that meeting, also made a statement on behalf of his delegation. He said that whenever anything extraordinary happened in Czechoslovakia or Manchuria the whole world shivered.

"If the accusations contained in the letter of the Chilean representative should be found to be true, the world might as well face the crisis to-day rather than two, three, or five years later. More delay in facing realities does not help. . . ."

The possibility of establishing a commission of enquiry or investigation was suggested by Mr. El Khouri of Syria, but he was pessimistic in considering the chances of obtaining co-operation from the present regime in Czechoslovakia.

That day's debate was ended by two questions which were addressed by the French delegate to Soviet Russia:

"Did the Soviet Union go to war to help Czechoslovakia in 1938? In the war which followed, did the Soviet Union go to war to help Poland? It may be that the Soviet Union, like us, was not ready to go to war at that time—but I should point out that at that time the Soviet Union made a pact with Hitler for the partition of Poland. If historical events are brought out, they should not be brought out in part, but completely." This was the French answer to a Soviet question whether it was in the name of friendship that the Czechoslovak people were betrayed and sold to Hitler at Munich.

At a further meeting, held on 6th April, an American invitation to the new representative of Czechoslovakia to participate in the debate was adopted by nine votes to none, with two abstentions (U.S.S.R. and Ukraine). Four days later came the answer, that 'the discussion based on slanderous allegations has confirmed the Czechoslovak Government's conviction that it was only

a pretext to stir up the hostile campaign against the Soviet Union and other states of Eastern Europe . . . and the Czechoslovak Government did not find it possible to take part in any way in such discussion'.

The Chilean representative insisted at a meeting on 29th April that the testimony available on Czechoslovakia be recorded and placed in the files of the United Nations.

"I reserve the right," he said, "if this action is opposed by the veto, to ask the Security Council to adopt some other means of obtaining this testimony and placing it on record."

On 21st May,<sup>1</sup> in spite of a strong objection by Mr. Tarasenko, the Council adopted by eight affirmative votes that Dr. Papánek should be given permission to speak again before the Security Council.

Dr. Papánek proceeded to raise further matters concerning the allegations of interference by the Soviet Union. He referred first to the visit of Mr. Zorin to Czechoslovakia, and asked if Mr. Zorin came to supervise the deliveries of grain, why he came uninvited, as he was, by the Foreign Minister, by the Minister of Foreign Trade, Food or Transportation; or without the invitation of the Cabinet as a whole.

"In any case, as the grain was bought and paid for, it would seem logical that a sovereign nation could distribute it without supervision. Has the Czechoslovak Deputy Foreign Minister any right to go to the U.S.S.R. at any time in order to supervise the distribution of the millions of pairs of shoes or steel products with which the grain is paid?" he asked.

Dr. Papánek then gave information on other important points which had been brought to his knowledge since he spoke last to the Security Council. These were as follows:

(1) The representative of the U.S.S.R. had failed to mention the conferences Mr. Zorin had in Prague with the Communist leaders Gottwald, Slánský, Kopecký, Zápotocký, Smrkovský and Nosek, which took all night; or with Fierlinger, who after being dismissed from the chairmanship of the Social Democratic Party in November said that he would be back in four months' time (and so he was); or General Rejciu, the Chief of the Army Intelligence Service, a confidant of Moscow.

(2) Mr. Zorin dealt in Prague with political matters. He was overheard to say: "The Soviet Union fully backs the energetic policy of the Czechoslovak Communist Party."

(3) On 24th February, *Rude Pravo* quoted Premier Gottwald, who said: "Beginning to-day we are attaching ourselves to the U.S.S.R. more strongly than ever before." The same newspaper

quoted in a special edition the Soviet press statement that "200 million inhabitants of the U S S R stand behind the Czechoslovak people in their fight for a true people's democracy"

(4) In 1945 in San Francisco Mr Molotov asked Jan Masaryk to propose that the Polish Lublin Government he invited to the Conference. Later Mr Molotov sent Mr Masaryk a note through interpreter Pavlov. It read

Mr Masaryk Mr Molotov asks me to advise you that if you do not act it will be a gross violation of the agreement between you and him Pavlov"

Mr Masaryk was so shocked by the threat it inferred that he gave the note to Dr Papánek and said 'Keep it, one day we shall need it' (The note was at the disposal of the Security Council)

(5) Since February no Minister or Ambassador could be appointed without first being approved by Moscow

(6) Members of the N K V D (Soviet Secret Police) had been stationed in Czechoslovakia since 1945, and on 23rd February 1948 were assigned to district commands of the Czechoslovak State Secret Police. Twenty-three, for instance, were stationed in Hotel Flora in Prague XI and sixteen in Grand Hotel Steiner in Prague I

A special intelligence bureau was established in the Hotel Imperial in Karlovy Vary and Captain Emil Valter of the Czech Police, who was now in Germany, was ready to testify to this

(7) Communist M P, Václav Junr, said in Domazlice on 11th April 'To-day I can already tell you that anyone who thought that Zorin came to Czechoslovakia because of grain would be foolish. The reason for his being here was to see that Americans did not cross the boundary. If they had, the Russians would have immediately entered our country'

(8) To support the accusations Dr Papánek suggested that Dr Lettrich, Dr Krymár, Mr Blazej Vilím Julius Firt, and Ivo Duchacek, all of them M P.s, should be heard. Also Captain Valter of the Karlovy Vary Police, General Moravec, former Chief of Army Intelligence, Dr Drabek, former State Prosecutor, and Mr Jandacek, a journalist, who all left Czechoslovakia after the *putsch* and had personal experience in the matters described by Dr Papánek

see that the United Nations is a forum for discussions that result in no action, will despair."

On 24th May, three days later, the Clulcan proposal, sponsored by the Argentine, that a Sub-Committee of three members should receive or hear evidence, statements and testimonies on the situation in Czechoslovakia and report to the Security Council, was on the Agenda as a draft resolution. Its adoption or abandonment depended almost entirely on the question originally raised by Mr. Gromyko, and which had already been discussed at length, as to the nature of such an action (of investigation) by the Council—whether it was substantive or procedural. If it was substantive, then the adoption of the resolution could be vetoed by one of the permanent members.

In the debate the representatives of the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine insisted that such an action would be substantive. Sir Alexander Cadogan, supported by Mr. Austin (U.S.A.) and by nearly all the other members, held the opposite view, that the draft resolution was definitely of a procedural character.

The matter was put to a preliminary vote. Eight members voted that the draft resolution was procedural (in other words that the U.S.S.R. could not veto it), the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine voted against, and France abstained. It seemed as though Dr. Papánek's case had been won and the investigation would be held. The President of the Council (Mr. Alexandre Parodi of France), intervened, however, and overruled the vote that had been passed, declaring that it must be interpreted as a vote to regard the draft resolution as substantive. He made his interpretation according to the Declaration of San Francisco (Para. 5), by which the veto could be employed in this preliminary vote. Therefore the U.S.S.R.'s vote against the preliminary proposal, by the President's decision, reversed the result and made the character of the draft resolution substantive.

It was now suggested by the Argentine Representative that the Declaration could also be interpreted, by quoting other paragraphs, in the other sense, by which the result of the preliminary vote would stand (and that Russia's opposing vote would not be considered as a veto). Other members (Canada, Belgium, Colombia, and later China) also disagreed with the President's ruling.<sup>1</sup> Britain (Sir Alexander Cadogan) agreed with the President's interpretation if one depended on the last paragraph of the Declaration. He said other parts of the Declaration pointed in a different way.

<sup>1</sup>The non permanent members of the Council were not in any case bound by the Declaration as they were not signatories. They were therefore free to vote against the President's interpretation if they wished. This was not the case with the signatory members, who if they abided by the Declaration their Governments had signed could find it difficult to vote against the President's interpretation.



The President then referred his ruling on the preliminary vote to a second vote by the Security Council. Five of the non-permanent members and China<sup>1</sup> opposed his ruling, the U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine supported it and this time Britain and U.S.A. joined France in abstaining. The six opposing votes were not sufficient to carry the point, and the President's ruling interpreting that Russia could use the veto in a preliminary vote and that therefore the nature of the draft resolution was substantive (which entitled her to use the veto for the second time in the vote on the draft resolution itself) stood.

The draft resolution was then put to the vote and the result was a foregone conclusion. All members voted for its adoption except U.S.S.R. and the Ukraine. Since the U.S.S.R. was in opposition it meant that the proposal had been vetoed and the investigation would not be held.

It will be seen that the fate of the investigation was decided not only by Russia's double veto, but by the factors that enabled her to make use of it, which arose from lack of agreement between the Council members on the interpretation of the San Francisco Declaration. According to the first vote Russia could not employ the veto; the President's subsequent ruling, however, supported the use of the veto in the preliminary vote and automatically therefore in the last vote; the President's ruling would still not have been final had not Britain and the U.S.A. found it necessary to support his interpretation of the San Francisco Declaration and abstain from voting against his ruling in the second vote. If they had been able to adopt the same course as China, who was also a signatory of the Declaration, but opposed the President's ruling, it is doubtful that Russia could have used the veto, and the investigation would probably have been held. What would then have been Russia's reaction, who earlier accused them of applying only the parts of the Declaration that suited them, is quite another matter.

Mr. Hsiu (China), who voted against the President's ruling, had earlier expressed what perhaps was his activating motive in pursuing this course, that if the allegations were true the world might as well face the crisis to-day rather than later. If one accepts Mr. Papánek's view, which I am about to quote, "facing the crisis", or undertaking the investigation, would have meant war.

China's decision to oppose the President's ruling was afterwards queried by Mr. Gromyko, who suggested that the representative of China had thereby acted in a manner contrary to the obligations assumed by his Government in San Francisco. How could he discard these obligations when the other permanent members had abided by them? The Chinese representative replied that he had not said China did not want to abide by the resolution. He maintained, however, that there could be a difference in interpretation of the Declaration and he did not agree with the President's interpretation.

Mr. Austin (U.S.A.) commented on the use of the veto in this instance: "The veto, in this case, has attempted to defeat the fundamental purpose of securing the fairest possible presentation to the world of all aspects of the Czechoslovak question. The responsibility for this falls squarely upon the U.S.S.R. I do not believe that the Security Council should let this matter rest in the present status of the record . . . for our part, we are prepared to obtain statements from Czechoslovak refugees who have information relevant to this case and who are now enjoying the right of asylum in free countries. It is our hope that other members of the Security Council will take similar action."

I later asked Dr. Papánek what was his view on the outcome of the Security Council deliberations. Here is what he told me—without bitterness and without using the strong words he had so often heard in the past weeks from the Soviet and Ukrainian representatives in the Security Council. He wrote:

"The action in the United Nations which I undertook on 10th March 1948, the day of Minister Jan Masaryk's death, was a necessity to make clear to the world public the standpoint of the Czechoslovak Republic and of the whole nation towards the events of February and all that followed afterwards. The great response in the Security Council of the United Nations, the energetic support of the action by the Chilean delegation and the understanding which was shown by the big powers, actually confirmed that the world public had expected this action.

"We have achieved this: that the violation of Czechoslovakia, conducted from Moscow and carried out by its commissioners in Czechoslovakia, was described in full detail to the entire world. This fact cannot be changed even by the mechanical use of the veto by Soviet Russia, which, of course, has made further and more effective political decisions by the Security Council impossible.

"The Czechoslovak case has also shown that the United Nations will still have to undergo an important development, if they are to become what they were created for: the defence of countries attacked by their more powerful neighbours and thus be the real defendant of peace and security.

"It can be said that as the Munich 'dictate' won for Czechoslovakia the sympathies of the World, the February 'dictate' of Moscow, in the light of the discussion of the Security Council, has had a similar effect on public opinion. Everything that was and will be mentioned in the Security Council serves as a document of our times and will be used one day, when, as I believe, the case of Czechoslovakia and all the other countries under Soviet domination will become a subject for action. Even if no

effective international step could be achieved until now, because such a step would have meant war, all countries represented in the Security Council, except the Soviet delegate and his Ukrainian double, took a clear standpoint in favour of Czechoslovakia. Our moral success was therefore complete and gave us an important basis, which will be of great value for our further struggle for the liberation of Czechoslovakia."

Defeated, though not by the fault of his or Czechoslovakia's true allies, Dr. Papánek has neither given up hope, nor the struggle for his country's liberation. He knows that he is not alone. Many more are on their way to join him. The group with whom I crossed the border of our unhappy country had seventeen members alone. . . . I want to tell you their story.

## CHAPTER TEN

# The Second Escape

1939 *Hitler's drive to the East*

1918 *Stalin's push to the West*

THE DAY after the Action Committee took over at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was announced that they had prepared a preliminary list of thirty-six officials who were to be expelled from the Ministry immediately.

The next morning I dictated the usual circular news-telegram to the Embassies abroad, and was just telling my typist, Miss Slavková "At the Ministry of Foreign Affairs an Action Committee has been formed which" when I was called urgently to see Mr Chmelař, now only nominal section chief. I passed through the office separating us, where Karl Robson of the *News Chronicle* was trying to discuss the latest events with the Communist-appointed "Gauleiter" of the Press and Information Section, Evžen Klinger. My interview with the Chief was very short.

On the way back to my room I paused long enough to announce the news to Karl Robson, and went on to finish dictating the interrupted telegram "which has organised a meeting of all employees and taken measures to ensure the undisturbed continuation of work. Thirty-six officials have been peremptorily dismissed—including the undersigned."

Miss Slavková stopped typing and looked up at me, to see whether I was joking. Then she burst into tears.

'Well, I thought I'd been fired, not you, so cheer up! If you think Mr Klinger won't pass the last three words, you can leave them out.' Then I packed up and left, walking round the quadrangle where Masaryk was to be found dead a few days later, past the police guards, into the sunshine.

I was sorry to leave Mr Klinger to carry on unobserved. All incoming calls were already being put through to him, even if they were intended for Minister Masaryk. A Boston newspaper, for instance, wanted to have a few details of what was happening in Prague. It had been painful to hear his answers.

"Of course the resignation of the twelve Ministers will be accepted. Yes, yes, President Beneš has no objection. Where is he? Where should he be? In his office, of course! Yes, everything

is quiet. No, no shooting, everything developing on strictly constitutional lines. There is no reason for excitement."

The voice at the other end of the line, several thousand miles away, must have asked something about Masaryk's health, because Klinger said "Nothing serious, just a slight attack of 'flu, you know. He will be all right in a few days." A short pause and then "It is almost certain that he will remain in office. He has full confidence in Mr. Gottwald's proposals to form a new Government of the National Front which has proved to be a success until now. There is not the slightest intention of changing this form of Government. Of course not. Czechoslovakia's foreign policy will remain as it was."

Home, within half an hour of my dismissal, I told Pat, my wife, I had just added the full stop to the chapter called the "Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs". Pat, as most Englishwomen would, I suppose, accepted it as calmly as if I had told her the kettle was boiling. We began to plan a course of action.

Exit permits had been introduced during the crisis, so our passports were useless to us. Any mistake might have disastrous results for us both. We had no illusions about the risks for people declared "unreliable."

Never before had I welcomed bad news. But a letter from England telling us that Pat's mother was ill seemed to be a sign from Heaven. "Need confirmation mother's illness," was the wording of the telegram we sent straight away. A few hours later the answer arrived telling Pat to come at once—her fare had already been paid in London.

The day of Pat's departure arrived, but her exit visa had not yet been issued. Neither had we a ticket for four-year-old Eva, born of Czech parents in England during the war, whom Pat had offered to take with her—to give her parents a chance to escape later. Pat's passport had not been returned from the Ministry of the Interior, we were told at police headquarters, and there was no chance of getting it if it had not been issued within forty-eight hours. "You must have been declared politically unreliable, otherwise your wife would be allowed to go," the official added.

So to the Ministry of the Interior, Dr. Broz, the man we were looking for, was the chief of the newly-created section dealing with the issue of exit visas. The corridor in front of his office was packed with waiting people. There was a trapeze artist who had engagements in France, a student who wanted to visit an academic congress in Holland, a business man who wanted to go to the Leipzig fair, and a ski-enthusiast who had planned a week in the Austrian Alps. All received the same answer: "Exit visa not granted."

Dr. Broz appeared suddenly at the doorway, his blond hair

falling over his forehead and his eyes cold behind his horn-rimmed glasses "No more of to-day's applications will be granted," he shouted "The passports will not be returned It is no use any of you waiting here"

Catching him as he turned back into his office, I addressed him as my colleague and said I had intended to call on my friend Dr Vesely, who was on leave Dr Broz smiled sarcastically and said loudly "Your friend won't come back here from his leave But that is beside the point Your wife cannot leave the country" His voice rose to a shout again, although Pat and I were only two feet away from him

It was 10 a.m. The plane was leaving in five hours But before we left for the airport, Pat was in possession of alternative travelling papers, which, though legal, were scarcely adequate to carry her past the security police However, we hoped for the best We even managed to contact Eva's parents and agreed with them that in the circumstances it would be safer for Eva to travel alone later in the care of the stewardess, and Pat would meet her at the airport in London We assumed that Pat would get away, that it would take at least a day before the Ministry of the Interior notified police headquarters that the exit visa on Passport 38, 472/48 had not been issued And Pat did get away—after she had been surrounded at the airport by armed policemen and questioned at length about me and about her journey to England

Some days later I was at the airport again with Eva, Daddy came too While her parents and Captain Vaclav Hrdina, also from the Western Army, waited in the car with her, I went to look for the crew to tell them about their small passenger for London I found them in the restaurant, a DFC pilot, the navigator and the steward, also war veterans I did not hesitate I told them my whole story and they told me to bring Eva along a few minutes before the plane left

Twenty minutes before the departure of the plane I carried Eva into the Customs office, with her small suitcase in my left hand A British landing steward took the suitcase from me and pointed out the guarded door leading to the airfield My heart began to beat faster With the baby and the air tickets in my hand, no one would question me Trying not to hurry, I walked through. Three policemen standing there made no attempt to stop me The official carrying the passenger list took no notice of me I walked on towards the plane But the landing steward dashed my hopes when he pointed to a young woman and said "Mrs Moudra is English. She's married to a Czech and she's going to London too She will look after the little girl You need not worry" I watched the passengers one by one, enter the plane, each being

ticked off on the list. I was even allowed to put Eva, who was chattering about the "big silver train", in her seat.

Then an official hurried over to say that two passengers would not be allowed to leave as their exit permits had expired the previous day. It seemed just too much that Pat would be waiting in London for this particular plane—which at the last minute had room for me. I strolled under the pilot's cockpit and gestured: "What about it?" He appeared to understand. I did not wait for more. In the split second while the landing steward turned his back to help the airways official to remove the barred passengers' luggage I entered the plane—and in a split second more I was ensconced inside the lavatory—with not more than five minutes to take-off. I waited for the whir of the engines, and thought long thoughts. And while I thought and waited, the door was pushed back, and the landing steward who had led me to the plane looked in.

"Come out!" I stood still, astonished and not a little afraid. "Come out, I said," repeated the steward in a low voice.

"You don't realise what it means to me . . . this is my last chance . . ." I answered. "Have you reported me?" I asked.

"Of course not, just come out." Out I went. The three policemen were still at the entrance to the airfield, and were looking towards the plane. I started to walk towards them, and mustered enough courage to greet them cheerfully as I passed through the doorway. Once out of their sight I made a dash for the car and we drove off. The London plane, with Eva in it, flew just overhead.

Václav and Karel, Eva's father, had seen from the car all that happened on the airfield. We decided to set off for the country at once, to spy out the land near the frontier.

Our goal was a small town in Southern Bohemia, close to the forbidden zone, which stretched right along the frontier, through the beautiful Šumava forests, and was some ten to twenty miles deep. My first call in the town was on a man who used to write to me in Luxembourg, after hearing the Czech broadcasts from there. To my dismay, it was soon clear that he was now on the side of the new regime. But he did give me an excellent map, carefully drawing on it the line of the forbidden territory, so that we should not get into trouble by crossing it unawares while on our "pleasure trip"!

Twelve hours later I contacted a man who was prepared to hide us in his lorry and take us one by one through the greater part of the danger zone towards the frontier. But we would have to go the last mile or two on foot. The driver did not want to risk being shot by frontier guards, who were also known to have specially-trained dogs.

Then Václav proudly took from his pocket a letter addressed to me on an official form, which read:

"Will you and your assistants please arrange to take over as soon as possible the twenty prefabricated houses at the Rokytno sawmill. The houses will be ready for delivery within three days and in the interests of the two-year plan the inspection and despatch of the material should be undertaken without delay as space and transport are required for further output."

Václav explained that his regiment had been stationed in that part of the Šumava Mountains. So the owner of the local sawmill was an old friend. The letter he wrote to me was to cover us should we be questioned on the way to his house at Rokytno. We were to make the final trek across the border with Mr. Jelinck, the owner of the sawmill, and his family.

Back in Prague the news on the situation along the frontier became more alarming day by day. Many had already reached safety. But we also knew of many who had failed to get away—including a group of high army officers, several of whom were killed in border fighting, only one managing to escape unhurt.

We started out again four days later, our arrangements complete. Václav went alone, by car, leaving three of us. I made one silly slip which might have tripped us all up. We were in a local train, and Eva's mother said she had a headache—and in these days it was difficult to get real aspirin.

"Don't worry, Jarka," I said, "as soon as we reach England there will be plenty of everything, even real aspirin." People looked meaningfully either at each other, or worse, at us, and some even laughed. Either there were no Communists among them, or they had all taken my remark as a joke. I was careful not to make the same mistake again.

In Strakonice we had more than three hours to wait for the train for Malenov, our next goal. The carriage was packed with people going home from work in the Strakonice armament factory. They were talking about Masaryk's funeral. "Of course no one believes Masaryk committed suicide," said a young girl. Then she stopped, suddenly.

An older man near her said quietly: "The frontier guards don't trust anyone, they just shoot at sight. It's dangerous for strangers to come to the border region these days." His hint did not go unnoticed.

At Malenov everything went according to plan. There was nobody to question us—at the start. But the Rokytno bus came to a sudden halt just as we were about to leave the town: police inspection!



"Those without season tickets must produce identity cards and give a reason for their journey," said the police officer who entered the bus. There was nothing to do but wait our turn. My diplomatic passport was the worst possible document I could have had. The only other paper I had on me with a photograph was the journalist's railway warrant issued by the State Railway. Karel, first to be asked to produce his papers, showed a Civil Service pass, entitling him to a 33 per cent reduction in fares. The policeman did not think it was enough.

"Haven't you an identity card?" he insisted—using the word for the identity card issued by the Germans during the war, and which continued to be recognised by the Czechoslovak authorities.

"No I haven't," said Karel. "I was not here during the war."

I thought it was time to intervene.

"I know this couple, Inspector. As a matter of fact we're travelling together to spend a few days with our friends in Rokytno. I'll guarantee they're all right. We had no idea there was any check-up over here and they didn't bother about documents."

"And who are you? How do you know them?"

"They're my friends. I'm from the Intelligence Section of the M.Z.V.<sup>1</sup> and will take full responsibility for them," I said energetically, seeing his doubts had been allayed by my previous statement. He took a notebook out of his pocket and noted down my name . . . Intelligence Section M.Z.V. . . . Railway warrant No 00119 issued by the Ministry of Transport. . . . Then he looked at the photograph, signed and stamped, in which, by a coincidence, I was wearing my war-time battledress, which was very similar to police uniform. The policeman saluted and continued his routine check. But his face as the bus moved off made us realise he was probably going to check up on us.

In guarded conversation, we decided that the risk in staying in the bus until it reached Rokytno was smaller than that of getting out earlier and losing contact with our guides who would wait at the destination.

A new passenger climbed in. He sat near us and tried to hear what we were saying. Then he put a small piece of paper into Jarka's hand. It was a note reading, "Alight one stop earlier. You would never get out of Rokytno. Ask the driver to stop at the cemetery and tip him twenty crowns. Follow your guide."

The brothers Jelinek were at work! The new passenger must be one of them! When he left the bus first we followed as quickly as we could.

<sup>1</sup>In Czech, "Intelligence Section" and "Information Section" are the same.  
<sup>2</sup>Pravodajský Úřad. M.Z.V. means Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

We went across the fields, avoiding farms and houses. After a mile or so, which we covered in silence, we reached a small valley and lost sight of Rokytno. There we made our first halt, and introduced ourselves. Our leader, as we had guessed, was Jindřich, the younger of the Jelinek brothers. He told us that police had met every bus coming into Rokytno since the previous day, arresting any "unwilling tourists" aboard.

We continued our march and, to our surprise, when we entered a thick pine forest some twenty minutes later we were met not only by the elder Mr. Jelinek—Jaroslav—but also by the cry of a child.

We hid our suitcases in thick bushes, strapped on our haversacks and went to have a look at the baby. Jan first introduced us to Squadron-Leader Petr Gruden who was in Air Force uniform, with R.A.F. wings. Next to him was his Scottish wife, Pamela, and daughter Diana, not yet a year old. A few yards away we saw more people with a baby: Captain Hrotek, and his wife Maria, who was also trying to quieten Tomas, her two-year-old son. The next day Mrs. Jelinek was to join us, with her two children. She would be accompanied a guide called Falta, who knew the country as far as the frontier.

Gruden, a Battle of Britain pilot, had been grounded the day the *coup d'état* was initiated—19th February. Nearly every airman who had served in the R.A.F. was considered unreliable by the security authorities. As Gruden had a summer cottage in the Sumava Mountains, he decided to leave Prague temporarily and stay there with his wife and baby. He had to notify his C.O. about the move, and when he arrived at the cottage he was met by the local garrison commander, Captain Hrotek, who told him that he had been made personally responsible for seeing that Gruden did not leave the country. Within a short time they had decided to escape together. That was how they came to join our expedition.

Václav joined us shortly afterwards and we were on the move almost at once. Mr. Jelinek knew every path even in the thickest forest, and avoided all roads or bridges. We had to guard against any chance encounters with other people, to say nothing of the border police. We slowly gained height and soon were walking in snow. After midnight those of us carrying the heavier bundles felt the first signs of weariness. By now the ground was rough and slippery. We could not afford to stop until we reached a deserted house, formerly inhabited by German foresters, who had left for Germany about a year earlier. At first sight of it we waited among the trees while Mr. Jelinek, carrying his hunting rifle, approached it with Jindřich, to be sure it was not occupied by another party of "border crossers", or even frontier guards.

Mr. Jelinek gave us a signal, and we entered the house. Suddenly a strange voice came out of the darkness. Jindřich reassured

us; it was a new guide, a forester who would take charge for the rest of the night. The Jelineks had to return and show themselves at the saw-mill the next day, before joining us in the evening with Mrs. Jelinek and the children. They now thought it would be possible to come part of the way by car and then through a short cut in the forest.

Most of the party had hoped to take too much with them. Little by little they abandoned their last few treasures. Those who, like myself, were carrying the heaviest communal packs were ruthless when any question of sentimental attachment arose. Karel and I had made up our minds before we left Prague only to take the barest necessities for a three-day trip. But of course we already had one escape to our credit.

At 3 a.m. the snow was three feet deep and there was thick fog. We were about 4,000 feet above sea level, and it became increasingly difficult for Antonin Rohan, our new guide, to find the way. Fortunately it was bitterly cold and the snow was frozen hard under our feet.

Some of the party began falling behind. From time to time they melted frozen snow in their mouths. We still had a few miles to go, and there was no alternative but to cover them somehow. The thought of a day's rest was the biggest encouragement.

Just before it was light the forester told us to wait again. He went on alone to inspect the hut which was our goal. About a hundred yards distant was a small cottage which, as Mr. Jelinek had told us, had been prepared to give shelter to Pamela and Maria and their babies, while the men took it in turns to rest and be on guard.

In a few minutes Antonin was back. The party split up, and while two of us saw the women and babies to the cottage, we made for the deserted hut, which had been used as a barn; fortunately it was still half full of hay. We made our beds on the hay while Václav took up a point of vantage from which he could watch the approaches to the building and the silhouette of the woodworkers' cottage. We all kept our revolvers at hand in case we should need them. When this was arranged, Antonin said good-bye and left us to ourselves. At least until the evening the responsibility was ours.

After midday we were all about again. We left the barn and made for the house. In the evening we even dared to light a fire in the stove, as the fog was coming down again and there was no longer any danger of the smoke betraying us. Later we spotted a group of people approaching the house. We knew the Jelinek family should arrive at any moment, but we kept our revolvers at hand. Within a matter of minutes we were all together, seventeen of us!

I could not help admiring Mrs. Jelinek. She brought her little

daughter Milena, who was only fourteen months old, and was determined to carry her the whole night through. Jindra, aged two and a half, was in the care of her father, while Jindřich Jelinek was to carry luggage and keep an eye on the whole group. Yet another guide, Falta, the one we had been told about earlier, had come with them. He had never left the forests for more than a couple of days, and he knew every tree and stone in the whole neighbourhood. We could not have had a better friend. It was a pleasure to watch him as he walked, easily as a fawn, and I dare say scenting the air like a fawn, too.

So began the most crucial period of our bid to escape. The fatigue caused by the previous night's walk soon became evident again. We had to stop often, and, what was worse, Hrotek had cramp in his right foot. His small boy, Tomas, had to be taken from his father's shoulders so often that he could not be kept asleep, despite a dangerously large dose of sleeping tablets.

He began to cry. His wails sounded loud and penetrating to people who had talked in whispers for hours past. Václav, Karel and I carried him in turn and only after he had tired himself out with weeping did he fall into a deep sleep.

Now I tried to pay more attention to Gruden. He was carrying Diana for the second night without allowing anyone to help him. He began to fill his mouth with snow, a sure sign of fatigue, and I became worried, wondering how much longer he could go on like that. We had hardly covered half the distance separating us from the border. I had to insist on taking Diana from him for a time. But he soon wanted her back again.

It became difficult to keep the party together. People snapped at each other, and tempers grew short. We were following a path in the completely black forest when the strap on the basket Gruden was carrying gave way. It had to be repaired. We soon lost sight of the first half of the party while the others waiting behind us became more impatient than ever. When it was ready, we tried hard to make up for lost time. By-passing a stream, we suddenly realised that we had lost the way. We stopped to investigate and saw a stream of light flowing straight towards us. Someone jumped off the path into the woods. Another shouted for help, and we took out our revolvers. The light was extinguished and there was a deadly silence. We thought that it was a frontier guard hesitating to engage a large group. I called: "Don't shoot, we have children with us," wondering meanwhile how to start negotiating. Then I recognised Jindřich's welcome voice.

"Of course, I won't shoot, I have just come to look for you."

We crept slowly out of the trees overjoyed at the outcome and hardly able to speak for relief.

On we went, scrambling higher and higher, always into deeper snow, supporting each other, snatching bites of food, allaying our thirst with snow, and longing for the end of it all. Whenever I drew near Gruden I was reminded of his R.A.F. wings and his rows of medals, and felt bitter. This reward was certainly not what Churchill had in mind when he said: "Never was so much owed by so many to so few!"

Here was one of the few who had helped to save the world, and this was the measure of gratitude he had earned. Now I was sure that it was only the small baby in the basket on his back that kept him struggling along, followed closely by Pamela, the Scots girl, who showed the quiet determination of her people throughout the whole march.

It was an hour after midnight, when we took another rest. The same question rose to everyone's lips—how much longer? Our guide Falta, kind and helpful, carrying the heaviest load, said encouragingly: "If all goes well I shall shake hands with you and say good-bye in two hours' time."

"Two hours," repeated everyone, wondering whether it was possible to carry on as long as that. The knowledge that in two hours we should be free made it possible. We trudged on, resting more and more often, till we finally reached the top of a hill surmounted by a narrow road which we had to cross. Falta stopped suddenly and said: "You had better say good-bye! Who knows how long it will be before you step on this soil again!"

Everyone fell silent. At that moment all the troubles and weariness were forgotten, in the realisation of what two hours before had seemed a far-off dream, on the borders of impossibility. Couples gripped each other's hands; silent war veterans and mothers kissed their sleeping children. Václav, who for the first time had lost his will to joke, went to Mr. Jelinek and patted his shoulder.

Eventually Falta suggested we should move at least a few hundred yards from the border, to the other end of the clearing lying ahead of us, to have a good rest before making the descent of the Bavarian slopes on the other side. Before going, we took leave of him.<sup>1</sup>

It was some time before we recovered our normal balance. Then we got together and congratulated each other and before we turned our backs on the frontier we had crossed, we cried together:

"We shall come back!"

It was not until we met the German Frontier police, after

<sup>1</sup> His name can be mentioned, because he is already a refugee himself, so is Antonín Rohan, the forester.

covering another three or four miles, that we realised to the full we were in Germany. Escaping abroad meant freedom and safety and it was an ironic fate for Czechs who had fought the Nazis for six years that we had to look for it in Germany.

The German police did not even ask many questions. They just said: "You can't go to Finsterau now." That was the nearest German village. "Just come to our hut with us and we'll see you there in the morning. Then we shall ring up the Americans and they will send you some transport."

That was how it happened. About 9 a.m. we managed to secure a sleigh which was normally used for carrying wood into the valley. We loaded our bundles onto it, and all the women and children with us had a comfortable ride as long as the snow permitted the sleigh to proceed.

In Finsterau we had to wait a couple of hours for American transport which was to come from Passau, some forty miles distant. I wanted a shave, so I knocked on the door of a house, explained what I needed, and met with every help. Before I had finished my shave a cup of coffee was on the table and even a piece of cake. I was not a little abashed when I heard my host was a Sudeten-German who had been expelled a year ago from Czechoslovakia. He noticed how uneasy I felt, and said: "It's true; we lost everything over there—but still we prefer the Czechs to the Bavarians!"

The explanation he gave me was simple. First of all, the Reichs-Germans considered the Sudeten-Germans as one of the causes of their sufferings during the war. Now the war was lost, they came to eat the bread that was so scarce. A simple attitude, but strong enough to make the Sudeten-Germans feel very unhappy and realise what they lost, when they betrayed a country, which, though not entirely their own, gave them more freedom and chance of a decent life than their aspired "fatherland." This attitude was the last thing I expected to find in Germany.

At midday we drove to Passau, the nearest Headquarters of the American C.I.C. (Counter Intelligence Corps). The preliminary interrogation was not long and the next day they took us all by car to Regensburg. We were not sorry, because the hotel in which we stayed in Passau was not more than some two thousand yards from the border of the Soviet Occupation Zone in Austria. This certainly had no attraction for us!

In Regensburg another interrogation by the C.I.C. followed but I did not stay there long. Together with a young Catholic politician, Dr. Pecháček, and his wife, I left for Frankfurt, where in the vicinity of the Continental Headquarters of the C.I.C., known as "Camp King", there was a small hotel housing most of the Czechoslovak politicians who had escaped, in which I was to stay for the moment. I met quite an unusual selection of my

countrymen there, all of whom were high on the Communist list of "reactionaries" under the headline "wanted".

Among others I should mention Dr. Krajina, the Secretary-General of the Czech Socialist Party, who after being arrested by the N.K.V.D. was released when Dr. Beneš intervened, and lost no time in escaping. Another prominent refugee was the Secretary-General of the Catholic Party, Dr. Klimek, M.P. His Social Democratic counterpart, Mr. Vilím, had left the house a few days before my arrival. Then there was Ivan Herben, the Editor in Chief of the *Free Word*, and his family, two of the most active Socialist M.P.s, Mr. Hora and Čížek, and, last but not least, Dr. Drábek, with his wife and two sons. He was the author of the excellent articles on the Communist pro-Soviet propaganda which had killed much of the sympathy the Czechs had for their Russian allies, and who protested in it against the legend which I quoted earlier, that it was only the Red Army we had to thank for Prague's liberation. Our former Ambassador in Washington, Dr. Veverka, the pre-war Minister of Interior, Dr. Černý, and a scientist who escaped from the Soviet controlled Uranium mines in Jáchymov, were also staying there. Soon we were joined by General Moravec, the Chief of Czechoslovakia's war-time Intelligence Service.

Everyone waited impatiently, to get visas to leave Germany for Britain, U.S.A. and other free countries.

In this house, which was called "Alaska", we made the first modest attempts to get some relief service for the thousands of Czechoslovak refugees, who came to Germany the same way as we did, but were sent to refugee camps, where, as we saw, the conditions were most deplorable. They lived on a diet of less than 1,000 calories a day, had practically no medical care, and had no chance of obtaining even essential clothing, although many of them had crossed the border with just what they were wearing.

The tragedy of the Czechoslovak refugees who left their country after the February *putsch* was the lack of policy among the allied executive organs in Germany. It took quite a time before it was realised that victims of Communism had the same rights as victims of Nazism, especially those who had fought to prevent the dictatorship.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# A President's Farewell

*"Without Beneš we should not have a Republic."*

THOMAS G. MASARYK.

*"The Western World can only bow its head in a sympathy not unmixed with shame. For Beneš was a patriot who manœuvred as skilfully as any man could to save the liberty of his people, and we all bear a share of the responsibility for his tragedy and theirs."*

*New York Times*: "The tragedy of Beneš."

DURING the war I read in one of the London evening papers what I felt was an unfair criticism of President Beneš, under the headline "False Prophet". The author seemed to have got hold of one of Dr. Beneš's radio speeches, intended for people in Czechoslovakia, in which he promised his eager listeners that the end of their suffering was drawing near. This I think was late in 1943, less than a year before the invasion of France, but the article suggested it was not the first time Dr. Beneš had made a similar prophecy although the end was still far off.

Leaving aside that Beneš was not so far wrong, it was mainly his optimism and Jan Masaryk's optimism that encouraged their enslaved people to carry their burdens to the end of the war, with better spirit and with a smaller record of collaboration with the Nazis, than if these stout-hearted leaders had preferred to be cautious and not to make any prophecies.

Unfortunately not only the optimistic prophecies of Beneš, who was a political scientist in his profound understanding of the world situation, but also the pessimistic ones, came true. He knew well, and said repeatedly, that countries like Czechoslovakia could only preserve their independence if understanding, co-operation and a certain balance between the Eastern and Western Powers could be maintained. Hence his untiring efforts in the past to bring Soviet Russia into the European political concert. When she joined the League of Nations, Beneš, the lover of peace and promoter of collective security, saw his vision of lasting co-operation draw a little nearer reality.

Years later—again in 1943—he had not changed his opinion. He said:



"I always realised that Munich and its catastrophic European consequences were only possible because of the discord and enmity of the Western Powers towards the Soviet Union. It was clear to me that if we wanted to win this Second World War, this discord must disappear. And should this discord remain after the Second World War, a new catastrophe would be inevitable and some kind of Munich would come for us in a completely new form, followed again by world catastrophe."

I would wish, for the sake of mankind, that the article written in the same year, naming Beneš as a false prophet, had been justified. This great humanitarian would have been glad to pay this price for lasting peace, if his warning had been heeded. Sensing and foreseeing the things to come, he acted in advance too. If we speak of the tragedy of Beneš, then we should say the tragedy was ours, for he was not sufficiently understood, and seldom given such attention that logical conclusions might be drawn from his words.

As a journalist I am glad that most of the world press was not only aware of his greatness but was just in evaluating the reasons for his failure—just to the point of self-accusation!

"It is not for the people of this country to pass judgment, with inadequate knowledge, on a brave and tragic figure who remained, even after the events of Munich, a loyal friend, a true democrat, and a good European," *The Times* commented the day after Beneš's death. *The New York Times* quoted Dr. Beneš as having said: "No nation would ever choose to occupy the position of Czechoslovakia," and added, "Certainly no statesman would choose to occupy his position, victim as he was of three great betrayals, and fated to leave his country in a worse state than he found it in his youth, the old imperium exchanged for a new and cruder tyranny. In the wreckage of all his work and all his dreams the melancholy cycle was complete."

To complete the portrait of Beneš, here is what Dr. Jaroslav Stránský, the former Czechoslovak Minister of Education and a man who for at least twenty years had been a most intimate associate and supporter of Beneš, wrote in the *Manchester Guardian*:

"... we Czechoslovaks do not hesitate what to say when standing over his grave. The case of Dr. Beneš is our own case. With all his virtues and errors, successes and failures, in his exhausting public service he was fanatically faithful to the Czechoslovak State. Of the whole Czech and Slovak people, he was the greatest, and no one in exile or at home is the heir to his authority."

Dr. Beneš ordered the Czechoslovak Army to action stations in May 1938 when Germany was tempted to make a violent attack

on Czechoslovakia—and forced Hitler to retreat. He had almost a million men under arms in autumn of the same year. He did not then give the order to open fire because he wanted to save countless lives of his compatriots and because he knew that the whole problem had to be settled not between two nations but on a much wider scale, either by understanding or by war. We are now fully justified in describing Munich as a betrayal. But Dr. Beneš was not bitter, and his patience was unequalled while he waited abroad—and not in vain—for his time to come.

Ten years later, in February 1948, he faced a similar situation. He did not call on the Army, of which he was in supreme command, but gave way before brutal force which he hoped to appease for the time being by his personal sacrifice. To this end he even remained in office, expecting that he would be able to exercise his moderating influence upon the ruthless gang in power. If his reckoning failed, it was because of a force over which he had no control; his illness fell on him just when the nation needed his strength most.

Dr. Beneš had his first dangerous stroke while he was still in exile in Britain. For this reason, when he was to return home from England in March 1945, his flight to Cairo, Teheran and Moscow was postponed by several days. He told one of his friends that he would not live long. "In our family," he said, "people die rather early from arterial sclerosis."

He suffered another stroke in the summer of 1947, which he himself considered to be sunstroke. His physicians were in no doubt of its real character. The effect on his general health was severe and lasting. But even such a grave state of health did not diminish the strength of his intellect and he was resolved to oppose any force. The five days between the resignation of the twelve Ministers and the acceptance of Gottwald's demands were a time of heroic struggle. It has been said that the *coup d'état* came sooner than it was expected; it might also be said that this was still too late, since on 27th November 1947 Dr. Beneš said to Dr. Stránský:

"If the Communists want to have a civil war, if I have to creep on all fours I shall call upon the Sokols, Legionaries, and everyone else, and they can have it!"

From the Communist point of view, in their accurate judgment of Dr. Beneš's power to resist their threats, it must be admitted that the date of the *putsch* was well chosen.

During the days of the revolutionary changes Dr. Beneš managed to rescue from imprisonment three of the leading Czech Socialist M.P.s, Dr. Krajna, Mr. Hora and Mr. Čížek, who had been arrested in spite of their parliamentary immunity. All three subsequently reached freedom and safety. He withstood the demand that he should support the new regime by a public

declaration. He also rejected Gottwald's demand for condemnation of those who had fled into exile. He said to the Prime Minister: "The people in exile are the only ones who can speak freely and I shall not raise a finger against them."

When Dr. Beneš spoke in public for the first and last time after the events of February he made a speech which will go down in the history of the Czech people. It was on 7th April 1948, when the Charles University of Prague was celebrating the 600th anniversary of the foundation of the glorious tradition of Prague for learning and wisdom. His three-minute address was a recollection of the tragic happenings which have always accompanied the centenary celebrations of the University. Speaking of the present anniversary, he said that the University was unable to celebrate the day in a period of tranquillity. He made a moving appeal for liberty, mutual understanding among the people, the freedom of science, belief and opinion. As he spoke, his voice nearly broke down, but he mastered it and finished his message, which no one failed to understand. He insisted that the proclamation renewing the foundation charter of the University begin with the words:

"Although the order and justice of the world secures and protects truth, nevertheless truth is neglected, disturbed or oppressed, and evil appears which overturns the human race. Therefore, that it may not be easy to pass over truth, from lack of knowledge, or negligence, or to destroy it from evil intention, from ancient times there have been given out witnesses, confirmed by appropriate means; and because in time truth may naturally perish, or be criminally destroyed, it is often renewed and ceremonially reconfirmed. This has come to my mind on the memorable day when the Charles University in Prague attains its 600th year of life and activity, and when we turn our eyes with eternal honour to the glorious foundation by Charles the Fourth, father of the fatherlands, and together are conscious of all its development, so full of glory and trials, and the most difficult fate. . . ."

Dr. Beneš then gave a reminder that the Germans who tried to exterminate Czech education, and the Czech people themselves, deprived of their age-old means of learning, were to be humiliated into a herd of unthinking people without rights.

"At that time," he caused the proclamation to continue, "in the horror of their deeds, the Germans, along with other properties and treasures, took possession also of most valuable documents, including the founding charter of Charles the Fourth,

issued on 7th April in the year 1348, judging that they would thus prevent the triumph of truth. But such purposes and efforts are in vain, for higher stands the validity and the power of the clear and honest word, which never perishes, which cannot perish."

If there were no other message left by the President to his people, these words in themselves can be said to express his unconquerable spirit and everlasting faith.

The President then instructed that the wording of the original charter should be included in his statement, since nothing could diminish the strength of the ideas of the noble founder. He concluded the proclamation by saying:

" . . . No one will dare to state, and cannot state, that the rights which it grants and the truth which it declares can be injured or interrupted. Rather this document becomes anew the foundation on which the Charles University in Prague may stand solidly for eternity, in blessed toil in the spirit of the old traditions, and may grow, increase and flower according to the current needs of the nation and State and of all humanity, always in reminder that the forces of free thought, seeking the truth and nothing but the truth, break chains. And in the freedom of thought, based on the equality, unity and fraternity of all, is rooted the happiness of our nation and of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, which desires to live in common effort and labour for a just order and the well-being of all humanity. . . . I have signed this document with my own hand and confirmed it by the seal of my office.

"DR. EDUARD BENEŠ."

The Czechoslovak President resigned from his office on 7th June, two months later, on the eve of the day he was expected to approve the new Czechoslovak Constitution, with which he disagreed and which thus remained unauthorised by him in protest.

It was generally believed, and I have it confirmed in writing by people who were in personal contact with Dr. Beneš (but whom I cannot now name, since they are still exposed to reprisals), that the President intended to hand in his resignation immediately after the acceptance of the new Government on 25th February. He made several more attempts at later dates, but the notes of resignation he handed to Gottwald were not passed on to the Government.

He explained his decision when he first made it as the logical result of the events of February, which had taken place in complete contradiction to his will. He had no guarantee of the democratic future of the nation and feared the setting up of concentration

camps. He had authorised the new Government because the country, in order to survive, must have some form of Government, but as a democrat he could not remain in office.

This was just before he left for Sezimovo Ústí, on Friday, 27th February, where he signed his first letter of resignation, which was to be issued officially in two or three days.

There Gottwald paid the President a surprise visit and urged him to "keep the flag flying". He promised to the President at the same time that none of the Ministers who had resigned would be harmed, particularly Dr. Drtina, who had attempted to commit suicide and was crippled, but who was still threatened with trial for conspiracy in the bomb plot against himself, Masaryk and Zenkl.

The election campaign began just afterwards, lauding the one list of candidates permitted, and declaring any electors who voted with a negative or blank form were traitors, with guilt in their hearts. On 4th May Dr. Beneš again told Gottwald he meant to resign on the following day. His letters of resignation were prepared not only for Gottwald, but also for Josef David, the Speaker of the House.

The President had been given the terms of the new Constitution. He told Gottwald: "I do not wish to cause difficulties, but I cannot and will not authorise the Constitution. The Constitution must be based on the principle of the will of the people, but the will in this is yours and Zápotocký's. This is the street mob, as I experienced it in February." He continued: "The Constitution has double meaning. Formally it preserves the democratic principles, but in reality it paves the way for undemocratic development,<sup>1</sup> especially in the laying down of the citizen's rights and in judicial procedure."

Gottwald could not refute the President's arguments, and promised to discuss the details of the resignation and its execution with the Government. He managed to postpone the official

<sup>1</sup>In his book *Democracy To-day and To-morrow*, written before and at the beginning of the Second World War, Dr. Beneš revealed the true face of Communism. He has never withdrawn one word of his accusations. He pointed out among other things

(1) Communism played a fundamental part in the defeat of post war democracies. Its only object was the supremacy of the Party and the establishment of the Communist State to which end everything was sacrificed.

(2) Between the two World Wars the Communists attempted a *coup d'état* in Hungary (Bela Kun), Bavaria (Kurt Eisner), Prussia (Laebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg), Bulgaria, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Greece, etc.

(3) After the First World War Communism did everything to destroy Socialism and Liberalism, thus giving excellent opportunities for the rise of Fascism and authoritative Conservatism.

(4) It is characteristic—wrote Beneš—that the methods used in their struggle by both camps, the Communist and Fascist, were the same. Both attacked the League of Nations, used demagogic slogans and introduced totalitarianism, etc. etc.

announcement until after the mock elections had been staged on 30th May, which in fact was one of the greatest tactical errors he could have made. It was plain that the President had resigned in protest against the February events, against the constitution he left unsigned; and since his resignation was dated after the elections, his action condemned these, too.

On 7th June the President signed in the presence of his Chancellor, Ambassador Smutný, and the Chief of his Political Office, Dr. Jina, and his military adviser, General Hasal,<sup>1</sup> a statement which was handed to the Prime Minister. It read:

"Mr. Prime Minister,

"On 4th May this year I informed you of my definite intention to resign from the office of President. At that time we discussed my decision in connection with the problems of the whole political situation.

"I also told you that my physicians had advised me to resign in view of my present state of health. With reference to that conversation, I beg you to inform the National Assembly of my decision and to ask that it will be cognisant of my resignation from the responsible office with which it honoured me by unanimous vote on 19th June, 1946.

"I thank the Assembly for its confidence; I thank the people for their confidence and love, which have always been a great support to me and which I have endeavoured not to fail. I wish that my dear fellow-citizens, their responsible representatives, their Government, and the Republic, may be spared all catastrophes.

"May all live and work in tolerance, love and forgiveness. Let them allow freedom to others and honestly enjoy freedom themselves. I believe in the good genius of our people and in a beautiful future for our dear Republic.

"EDUARD BENEŠ."

The President added a protocol to the letter about his discussion with Gottwald, but the Government did not inform Parliament or the people what were its contents.

"The reason for this secrecy was clear," said Dr. Lev Sychrava, one of Beneš's intimate friends, who saw him shortly before his own attempt to escape for the first time from Czechoslovakia. "They wanted to invent a fairy tale that Dr. Beneš approved of them." At a London meeting of Czechoslovak soldiers who served in Britain during the war and who again found refuge in Britain after the February revolution, Dr. Sychrava referred to that protocol for the first time. Later on he gave me a copy, so that it could be made known to a wider public.

<sup>1</sup> General Hasal Nílborský fled the country in autumn 1948

In this protocol, which describes the discussion between President Beneš and Prime Minister Gottwald, in Sezimovo Ustí, on 4th May, it was stated that the decision the President wanted to make was important, personal and irrevocable. On Saturday, 1st May, he had asked Chancellor Smutný to visit the Prime Minister to inform him of his decision to resign—and to request his attendance on the President.

The President wished to make known to the Prime Minister certain of his opinions concerning the new Constitution. He had discussed it at length with Dr. Procházka<sup>1</sup> and reached the conclusion that his ideas were very different from those expressed in the suggested Constitution. The President thought that no reconciliation between those differences was possible. The new Constitution introduced another conception of the "will of the people" than was expressed in the previous Constitution. The oath of the President had been changed and the President could not agree with the new wording.

"How can we discover what is the real will of the people?" asked Dr. Beneš, and went on to say that "finally it could again be the street mob. In February it was the street mob who spoke." Should such a possibility be even permitted by the Constitution, "I could not remain in office."

The President underlined that elections with one list of candidates were not democratic. If the Prime Minister had other ideas on the subject, this was a fundamental difference of opinion and he wanted to demonstrate the obvious conclusion by resigning.

The President knew that a new law "for the defence of the People's Democratic Republic" was being prepared, where the citizen's rights were so laid down that their exercise would be very limited. And they would even be decided upon by the Ministry of the Interior.

But what was most disagreeable for the President, was that in the proposed Constitution there were rulings of ambiguous meaning. It was evidently to be in the sphere of activity of the civil service to decide how they wished to interpret them. The Constitution knew no guarantee of the citizen's rights or provision for their democratic control. No provision was made for the administrative courts and no undertaking to preserve the independence of the laymen judges.

Part of the conversation between Dr. Beneš and the Prime Minister took place in the presence of Madame Beneš, and her name is mentioned in the protocol. It is clear that Gottwald did all he could to postpone the resignation because he feared the reaction of the people. He said:

<sup>1</sup>A Communist M.P. and general rapporteur on the new Constitution—not the ex-Health Minister, now in exile

"Your resignation is a mark of your disagreement with our politics. When a President resigns three weeks ahead of the elections and before the authorisation of the new Constitution, that is how it will be understood."

Dr. Beneš replied: "You can postpone the elections to a later and more suitable date. I find it insupportable to hold office any longer." He added that the Premier could see this for himself. He had not wished to remain in office after February.

The Prime Minister pointed out that a resignation at that time would have provided a welcome opportunity for the West to attack the country. Dr. Beneš agreed that this might have been the case, "but it would have been less noisy than you think, Mr. Prime Minister, and soon over," said the President.

Mr. Gottwald suggested that if the President's intention to resign was irrevocable, he should do so after the elections or be even could take a recreational leave for three or six months which would solve the question of the elections and the necessity of authorising the Constitution. At this Dr. Beneš stated:

"Apart from political reasons, there is also the state of my health. This does not permit discussion of all matters with which I do not agree, and such a situation is intolerable for me. Madame Beneš and Chancellor Šmútný can witness that I am very patient, but the fact is that I cannot work, receive politicians, and Ambassadors and be informed of everything as I have been accustomed, and this deprivation means great suffering for me. I have not talked about it until now, but it must once be said. I have worked all my life and now I cannot continue. I wish to enter upon a private life even if in effect it means leaving all that life has meant to me. To end my life like this is very painful, but I do not feel in good enough health to fulfil my duties according to my best conscience and so I must stand down. I understand, as a politician, that my resignation must be appreciated by the Prime Minister as a political step—but retire I must!"

At this point the President recalled his co-operation with the Communist leaders during the war in London, in Moscow and in Košice—"but the Prime Minister must understand," said Dr. Beneš, "that it was the pressure to which I gave way in February which forced me to make certain decisions to prevent bloodshed—and that fact has brought to me, as the head of the State—great humiliation, and that humiliation I cannot forget!" Finally the President formulated his attitude towards the Communist Party and Soviet Russia, and stressed that the present difficult situation might even lead to war.

The discussion described in the protocol ended with a remark by Gottwald, who said that he did not consider war to be inevitable. "We shall not live to experience a war, but our children



and their children will not be able to avoid it," were Mr. Gottwald's last words.

"The document is not a festive declaration," said Dr. Sychrava, "nor an appeal, nor a message to the nation. It is a dry, sober and carefully-written official note on a discussion on which three main points have emerged:

"(1) The President was unable to accept a Constitution in which the will of one party was the highest law in the State. It would legalise a condition of 'permanent revolution' as in a Bolshevik country, or, in other words, would confirm that 'Right is the tool of the politician' as Mr. Vyshinsky declares. Dr. Beneš saw that the February revolution was carried out on the basis of these principles. It would lead to a civil, and, later on, an international, war. His resignation was a protest and a warning.

"(2) The Communists dealt with Beneš according to their rule: 'Who is not for us is against us'.

"(3) The way in which the name of Beneš is exploited by the Communists is plain proof of their weakness."

I think this document, which has <sup>also</sup> reached official circles abroad, is the final confirmation of Dr. Beneš's standpoint and his reasons for resigning.

So when the Presidential flag was lowered that day over his house in Sezimovo Ústí it was the second time since February and the last time.

As soon as the President's resignation became known in London, I was empowered<sup>1</sup> to issue a statement on behalf of the Czechoslovak political émigrés in London, which said:

"The news of President Beneš's resignation is not a surprise to the Czechoslovak M.P.s in London. In fact, it has been expected for some time, since Dr. Beneš originally intended to resign at the latest within three weeks of the Communist February *coup d'état*.

"The reason for his remaining in office for longer than three weeks was that he hoped to be able to gain at least some advantage by it in saving certain of the democratic liberties of Czechoslovakia. It is considered that, realising the Communist terror was beyond his control, he decided to resign before having to approve the new Constitution, which makes Czechoslovakia merely a satellite state of the Soviet Union, without any independent rights, and in complete contradiction to Dr. Beneš's well-known principles of democracy.

"To sum up, there are three reasons for his resignation:

<sup>1</sup> As Editor of the *Information Service of Free Czechoslovakia* which I began in May 1948

loss of memory, and has difficulty in expressing his ideas. This state changes, however, and after resting Dr. Beneš is again in the condition of a healthy man, making his decisions with his usual exactitude and magnanimity. Each new phase of a higher blood pressure is accompanied by the same signs of strain.

"The President himself believes in his eventual cure, but those round him think that only maintenance of, or a slight improvement in, the present state, is possible."

The people lost no time in demonstrating their feelings towards the retired President. During the Sokol Rally, at the end of June, when several hundred thousand members of the nationwide traditional physical fitness organisation assembled, the name of Beneš was cried and applauded ceaselessly, putting the new rulers into shadow and obscurity.

It began with the display by the Sokol children—some 25,000 of them. As they finished their exercises in the huge arena, they turned towards the main stand where President Beneš would have been sitting with Madame Beneš, had he still been in office, and shouted in unison: "Long live President Beneš!" They ignored Gottwald, who was there instead.

The same thing happened during the march past of the men and women members of the Sokol organisation, who addressed each other as brothers and sisters. They shouted: "Long live brother Beneš!" Other groups called: "Long live President——" covering their mouths with their hands to smother the last word. They added after it: "We love—but not by order!" All cheering stopped as they approached the stand where the new President was to take their salute. They passed it in silence. Many of the Sokol leaders were afterwards interrogated by the police, and by way of excuse they explained that President Gottwald had been standing near the Unknown Warrior's tomb, and the silence was meant in respect to it. The children, they said, had been trained long in advance to greet President Beneš, and it had not been possible at such short notice to explain the change to them. Be that as it may, the organisation was marked down for an early purge.

Wherever she appeared in public, Madame Beneš received such spontaneous and convincing ovations that the Communist clique became alarmed. When the elections were held, in place of voting slips, a considerable proportion of the envelopes had contained photographs of Beneš and Masaryk, which were sold out in the shops all over the country. It was therefore declared that envelopes containing pictures of Dr. Beneš were to be considered as pro-Governmental votes "because Dr. Beneš has appointed the Government now in power".

The first step to stamp out Dr. Beneš's popularity was the purge of the Sokol organisation. The leaders of the movement were to be held responsible for the demonstrations. By this act alone the new regime admitted that Dr. Beneš was in opposition to them. If he approved of them, as they claimed, why crush demonstrations of affection for him? Madame Provaznikova, the chief of the women members of the Sokol, half a million of them, told me in London, where she had been attending the Olympic Games, that she was proud to have the opportunity of declaring herself a refugee. Because of her international functions in the athletic world, it would have been very difficult for the Ministry of the Interior to refuse her an exit permit. Otherwise she would certainly not have been permitted to attend the Games, as she had already been accused of encouraging the pro-Beneš demonstrations, and if she returned would be faced with an order to authorise the wholesale purge of the Women's Section of the Sokol, and eventually her own dismissal. She explained to me that she had never been a politically-minded person, but even at her age—she was fifty-seven—she refused to return to a country where she was restricted in every possible way and was not permitted to continue her work in peace. That I think was an answer to the Communist claim that it was only their political opponents and their reactionary supporters who found cause to criticise them.

The second move against Dr. Beneš came from Moscow. The official Soviet review, *New Times*, published an unqualified attack on Dr. Beneš on 11th August, accusing him of a number of actions directed against the Soviet-Czechoslovak Alliance.

The article was the first of its kind, the Soviet press having for a long period carried only appreciation of Dr. Beneš's achievements. The author, N. Rubinstein, stressed the following criticisms:

(1) Beneš was accused of having refused for years to recognise the Soviet Union, doing so only after the United States undertook that step.

(2) The former President had refused to accept Soviet aid against the Germans at the time of the Munich crisis in 1938.

(3) He restrained the Czechoslovak people from active opposition to the Nazi occupants of their fatherland.

(4) He spent the war in comparative safety in London, while his people, led by the Communists, fought on the home front.

(5) After the war, Dr. Beneš fell victim to his dreamy conception of making Czechoslovakia a bridge between the East and the West.

"As a protest against:

- (1) The violent solution of the crisis in Czechoslovakia;
- (2) The way in which the elections were held;
- (3) The new Constitution, which he declined to authorise."

The Prime Minister admitted, when reporting Dr. Beneš's resignation at an extraordinary session of the Cabinet the same day, that he had long endeavoured to persuade Dr. Beneš to change his mind and remain in office. He referred to a medical report he had presented to the Cabinet some time before which demonstrated that Dr. Beneš's state of health would not allow him to remain in office any longer. Mr. Gottwald did not explain, however, if this was the case, and the President's life was in danger, why he tried to dissuade him from resigning and leaving some chance of improving his health.

The Gottwald regime, brought to power by brutal force, and depending on the strength of the uniformed and secret police, backed by the Soviet N.K.V.D., was anxious to check the resentment and indignation just under the surface everywhere, by keeping Dr. Beneš, with his immense authority and popularity, in office as long as possible. It was not difficult to judge from the mood of the people that they were pinning their hopes on some miraculous action by Dr. Beneš. They had to be kept in this frame of mind while their new masters consolidated their position. A Czechoslovak diplomat, who left the country early in June, summed up the situation as follows:

"Regarding Dr. Beneš's position in Czechoslovakia, it can be said that a fraction of the population blames him for accepting the resignations of the twelve Ministers in February. But for the majority of the people he remains the symbol of the Republic. On his birthday huge crowds came as pilgrims to Sezimovo Ústí, and the day was celebrated everywhere. The Government recognises him officially as the President Constructor, but unofficially he is not trusted. He and his associates are spied upon and shadowed by the police, and precautions are taken to prevent him from leaving for abroad. The airport, near Tábor (a few miles from Sezimovo Ústí) is under close guard."

This report was confirmed by the President's brother, Jan Beneš, an American citizen from Milwaukee, who visited the President in Sezimovo Ústí at this time. He was constantly followed and was uneasy while he was in Czechoslovakia.

Any doubts as to the extent to which the Soviet "grey eminence", Mr. A. V. Zorin, influenced the trend of events in February were dispelled by his reappearance in Prague when it became certain that the President's resignation could not be put off any longer. The manner of its acceptance, the date of the

official resignation and even the choice of Dr. Beneš's successor were left to his discretion.

Before the new Presidential election was staged on 14th June, the Prime Minister, Mr. Gottwald, acted as President pro tem, and in this capacity he hastened to authorise the new Constitution. It was obvious that as soon as the new Presidential candidate could be elected, nothing would stand in the way of his unanimous election by the new Assembly, where the 70 per cent Communist majority was well backed up by the remaining members, who were permitted to pose as candidates under the names of the former majority parties. And so it happened. Mr. Zápotocký then rose to be Premier, and enabled the former Slovak Communist Under-Secretary for Defence, Mr. Ševčík, to assume the office of Vice-Prime Minister. Mr. Laušman, who had drifted from a centre position in the Social Democratic Party to the right, when he was elected Chairman at the November Congress to replace Fierlinger, and who swung back at the time of the February crisis and made a pact with Fierlinger, for which he was rewarded by the Communist Party after the *coup* with one of the five posts of Vice-Premier, now left the Government altogether. His place was taken by Fierlinger, and, his usefulness over, he was cast aside.

Fierlinger's recent post as Minister of Industry fell to a Moravian Communist, Mr. Augustin Kliment, formerly Chairman of the Metalworker's Branch of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement. This completed the changes following the appointment of the new President.

In recognition of his services, Dr. Beneš was given the Castle of Lány, the country seat of Czechoslovak Presidents, for his life-long use, and an annual pension of £15,000 was granted. He made no use of either.

Dr. Beneš's intention after his resignation was to abstain from any public activity and to concentrate on improving his health which had suffered greatly from the strain of the past months, when he had found it impossible to accept the physicians' advice to limit his work to half the day only.

The report we received in London only a fortnight after his resignation was alarming. It stated:

"Only complete rest will assist in regulating the high blood pressure which results in difficulty in walking, partial paralysis of the right arm and impediment in the speech.

"Political discussions are tiring and affect the blood pressure. Before meetings with Gottwald the President is usually upset and nervous excitement lasts longer.

"Intellectually the President is sometimes affected by a partial

(6) Since he had committed all these serious mistakes, he had to be deprived of his office.

The last point, incidentally, was inconsistent with the Communist explanation of Dr. Beneš's resignation put forward in Prague, which rested entirely on his illness.

The author also quoted from the *Beneš Memoirs*, which leads one to wonder whether it was not the careful study of the *Memoirs*, published in 1947, which gave rise to this attack. For on reading them, there is only one conclusion to be drawn—that if ever the Munich betrayal was equalled, it was done so by the Soviet Union, who violated all pacts and broke all promises made to Dr. Beneš. The article might have been the forerunner of the withdrawal of the *Memoirs* from circulation, but in any case this would have been of little effect as over a quarter of a million copies were already in the hands of the people, who treasure it almost as much as the works of the teacher of Beneš, T. G. Masaryk, the President Liberator.

Every step taken by Soviet Russia and the Communists in Czechoslovakia was envisaged in this book. Writing of the post-war changes in Europe, Dr. Beneš condemned any kind of revolution—he said that changes could be carried out either step by step, through evolutionary, empirical or scientific economic planning, without catastrophes or force, and by agreement and co-operation; or, by revolution and force, which was psychologically wrong and provoked anti-revolutionary forces. He, Dr. Beneš, was for the evolutionary way "categorically and without exception". He continued:

"I am also for it because I am a true democrat. I know that in the development of nations and States there are periods when forcible revolutions are necessary. But I know, too, that in certain phases of national history attempts at forcible revolution stand for attempts to establish a true reactionary rule." These terms might well apply to the events of February. The teachings of Dr. Beneš in his *Memoirs* were synonymous with the increasing realisation among the people after February that there was a striking similarity between the Nazi oppression in the Second World War and the methods now used by the Communists. The Communist Party, notwithstanding, continued to use Dr. Beneš's name to support or explain their policy, knowing full well that he had no chance to defend himself.

The last message sent abroad by Dr. Beneš, now in the hands of Dr. Krajina, was received in the second half of August. He dictated it to a reliable friend, and it mainly concerned the decisions he took in February during the crisis. He confirmed that he had been threatened by general strike and revolution,

which, if necessary, would be supported by the Soviet Army concentrated along the frontiers. He investigated what help he could rely upon from the Western Powers, since he was already inclined to use the Army to stamp out the threatened revolution, but when the answer came that no other than moral support would be forthcoming, he reconsidered his decision and accepted the resignations.

No less an authority than Sir Bruce Lockhart, the former Minister to Czechoslovakia, has declared that Beneš was left alone to fight against odds which were superior to one man and a small nation. He wrote:

"The battle for power was almost lost on the first day of the second liberation. It could have been won only by a resolute Anglo-American policy, and for their tardiness the American and British Governments share some of the responsibility for what history will call the February revolution."

Dr. Beneš was unable to inaugurate personally the third struggle for his country's liberation, although the whole world waited to see whether he would again go abroad to lead his people to freedom. More than once I have had to deny that he had appeared abroad—though I always hoped it would come true.

But the state of his health deteriorated rapidly. On Tuesday, 31st August, another stroke worsened his condition, and he became unconscious. Four days later, on Friday, 3rd September, the ninth anniversary of the outbreak of the Second World War, he died a few minutes after 6 p.m.

The last period of Dr. Beneš's life was a tragic one. His friend, the former leading Vice-Premier, Dr. Petr Zenkl, said in London shortly after his escape from Czechoslovakia:

"Lately he has led a sad life, on the ruins of his work, guarded by those who had violated truth and declared the ruins a paradise of which he was the creator."

Dr. Stránský, former Minister of Education, also in London, said of him:

"Czechoslovakia is his monument as the Cathedral of St. Paul is the monument of Wren."

What did Dr. Beneš have to say himself? In the last chapter of his *Memoirs* he was no longer an optimist. The problem of East and West was his final dilemma.

"Did I see and envisage correctly or incorrectly the present development between the East and the West?" he asked. "Will the final development continue towards the final outburst of force, or will both sides cease their praise of their revolutionary strength and atomic bombs . . . and return to the policy of

statesmanship conducted in the difficult time of war? If not, then woe betide all of us, without exception!"

He concluded

"On the answer given to this fundamental question, of sensible, or forced and unhappy, future development, the peace and future of the whole world depend to day"

This was his warning May we profit from it!



## CHAPTER TWELVE

### What of the Future?

*"People under dictatorships, it has been well said, are condemned to a lifetime of enthusiasm. It is a wearing sentence. Gladly would they burrow into the heart of their misery and lick their wounds in private. But they dare not: sulking is next door to treason. Like soldiers weary unto death after a long march, they must line up smartly for parade."*

EUGENE LYONS: *Assignment in Utopia.*

"IT WAS a bloodless revolution" was the proud claim trumpeted to all four corners of the world by the Communist propaganda machine—the carefully synchronised press, radio and Cominform channels.

Official reports from the country expressed indignation at the accusations of threat and intimidation. "The police are the friends of the people," they said. Soviet Russia, they claimed, was their ally for racial and geographical reasons. How could anyone say the elections were not free, when every citizen could vote against the list? How could anyone say the Communists had seized power when all parties were represented in the Government?

"Life is normal in Czechoslovakia"—officially—and this impression was sold to every visitor from abroad. Communist visitors, of course, did not need persuading. The Secretary of the Communist Party of Israel, Mr. S. Mikunis, came, and the statement he made subsequently was published in the Czech press:

"The foreign visitor can already see on the streets that the people feel more free, that they can express their true opinion, because they realise that they have become masters of their own fate. They have got rid of the foreign imperialist influences. The Czech bourgeoisie, which was supported by British-American imperialism, was politically defeated . . . the Communist Party took over the great task of strengthening and safeguarding national independence in Czechoslovakia."

Indeed it was not surprising that foreign Communist leaders should visit Prague and applaud this further step forward in the Cominform plans for domination. That after all is their job. But

unfortunately politicians professing other beliefs were led along the same path. Mr. John Platt Mills, M.P., for instance, declared over the short-wave broadcast from Prague, during the crisis, that:

"The most striking incident I saw was right at the end of a gathering in Wenceslaus Square, when a group of women set on the police officers and kissed them. I had not noticed the police until then. . . . What has really happened is that the right wing of every party in the Government, what I call the backward section, has been ousted, and the progressive section of each party has come into power. . . . I wish them success for their future."

Colonel George Wigg, M.P., who had visited Prague and attended Masaryk's funeral, wrote in the *Star* on 22nd March:

"The ordinary visitor to Czechoslovakia will see little sign of revolution or change. The shops are open and filled with goods.<sup>1</sup> Transport, hospitals and other essential services are normal. . . ."

Mr. R. H. S. Crossman, M.P., who went to Prague with Colonel Wigg, admitted, however, that "thousands of people have been thrown out of their jobs, because they were held to be 'reactionary'". But he claimed that "at the moment these men are using 'soft' methods".

When the circumstances surrounding the visits of foreigners are examined, it must be admitted that they would be hard put to it to find out what the man-in-the-street really thought about the changes, and what was going on under the surface. They are interviewed by representatives of the Communist regime (Colonel Wigg, for instance, saw the Communist Minister of Justice, Dr. Čepička, and Mr. Rudolph Slánský, the Secretary-General of the Communist Party) or by officials trusted to say the right things. The wayward officials had already been purged.<sup>2</sup> And the Communist officials naturally did not take the visitors by the hand and lead them to the uranium mines in Jachymov, where,

<sup>1</sup>That of course was still shortly after the *coup d'état*. Within a few weeks all the goods have disappeared and in a matter of months the simplest things such as nails or other household things were simply unobtainable. The Two-Year Plan finished in a fiasco, and the Five-Year Plan, arranged to suit the Soviet mobilisation plan, continues with the change-over of the lighter export industries—where highly skilled craftsmanship was necessary—to heavy industry, which of course, has nothing to offer the small consumer.

<sup>2</sup>On 3rd March the Ministry of the Interior issued a directive, No. C B 3244-2/3/48/IV/1, explaining that four categories of employees could be purged: (1) unreliable, (2) unsuitable, (3) incapable, (4) inefficient. As a guide to "unreliability" it states: "The relations between employer and employee are based on mutual confidence and reliability to the State. Where these are lacking an employee is to be considered as unreliable. From this aspect, therefore, an employee is unreliable if he does not show sufficient understanding for the new people's democratic adjustment of the State or the commitments towards Slav countries, such as the identification of his concept with the opinion of reactionary politicians, negative attitude towards nationalisation, the T U C. institution or other achievements of the revolution. . . ."

guarded by Red Army men, thousands of Czech people work and die on forced labour. Language difficulties in any case would make it difficult to talk to a passer-by. The possibilities for a foreign visitor of obtaining information in this way were and are extremely limited.

In July 1948 a British delegation was invited to Prague by arrangement of the British-Czechoslovak Friendship League. It was accompanied by Mr. Hampl, the Secretary of the League, who gained a good deal of publicity on his return when he was refused permission to remain in Britain. Miss Hewson, one of the delegation, which included Dr. Stross, M.P., told me on her return:

"I went because I wanted to see for myself what was happening there, but it was difficult for us to get in touch with the ordinary people. We were escorted on officially arranged visits by car and to receptions from early morning till late in the evening, when we were taken back to the hotel to sleep. We asked Mr. Hampl if some of us could go off on our own, but Mr. Hampl and Dr. Stross decided that we should remain with the party. Several of the Ministers received us and talked at length, through interpreters, on the new Czechoslovakia. I decided to stay on in the country alone for a few days after the others went home, although Mr. Hampl did not agree and said it would not be advisable to remain. I approached the Ministry of the Interior independently and managed to get permission, but, to my disappointment, when I tried to get in touch with Czechs I met over there last year and in England they would have nothing to do with me, and I realised they were afraid of entertaining a foreigner. The circumstances make it impossible for an official visitor to get a real picture of present conditions. I could only have got that by living among the people as one of themselves."

Let us return to some of the changes which the foreign visitors commented upon and which were so lauded in the Communist press.

It took two or three weeks before the first big purge was over. The Civil Service was one of the first professions to be brought into line, and the older and more experienced officials who dared to have independent views received special attention. Their existence was well safeguarded, as Mr. Zápotocký announced, since they would be found work in essential industries, such as mining, forestry and farming. The same fate was in store for 143 journalists and dozens of leading writers who were expelled from their Unions.

In industry and business the purge took the form of expelling the legal owner, or reducing him to the lowest grade of employee, while book-keepers or messengers took their places. It cannot be said that the workers were throwing out the capitalists, since in the

sense that the word was understood in the Western World capitalists hardly existed in Czechoslovakia—socialism was so far advanced that there were no extremes of wealth and poverty. Very few people had a bigger income than the Communist Ministers now have themselves.

The justification given for the right to disown anyone from his lawful property lay in two words, "Public interest", and that was the only excuse given, whenever a non-Communist tradesman or factory owner was turned out.

The results of this economic upheaval soon made themselves felt. The morale of the workers and their output went down rapidly. Lack of discipline and respect for the new superiors bred many ills. On 27th August, 1948, *Svobodné Slovo* admitted that in the Ostrava coalfields more than a quarter of the miners were absent from the pits. Members of the Government constantly complained in public speeches of falling output, absenteeism, managerial inefficiency and faulty distribution. According to Mr. Zápotocký, who was speaking to the Central T.U.C., "some workers wanted to get everything and give as little as possible in exchange. Too many people feigned illness, and there were too many fires. . . ." Cases had occurred where workers' committees had divided profits among the officials of the committees and local trade union leaders, some of whom received as much as £225. What else can be expected when a barber is sales manager of a porcelain factory, and a former lorry-driver presides over the workers' committee which has replaced the board of directors—not by his merit, but by his political allegiance.

"There was no bloodshed, because the use of force was not necessary," stated Colonel Wigg. Jan Masaryk did not die a natural death, nor did Dr. Drtina, who jumped out of the window of his villa and is crippled for life. Suicides in numbers unheard-of since the Nazi entry into Prague in 1939 were a daily occurrence. A student was shot during the demonstration on 25th February. Considerable numbers were shot as they tried to escape into Germany. Was this not bloodshed?

In the summer of 1948 a memorial service was held in the Westminster Cathedral for Rostislav Sochor, a leader of the Catholic farmers, who was beaten to death by the police, after his second arrest, for protesting against the Peasant Farmers' Rally of 29th February. He wanted to rally the peasants to fight for their true interests. This was only a typical example of many similar instances.

Thousands upon thousands of people escaped over the frontier—not only opposition politicians and writers, but ordinary folk, farmers, housewives, clerks, students, with nothing but what they could carry. Others were smuggled over in transport vans. A

few were lucky enough to get away by air. A passenger plane leaving Prague for Bratislava in April changed its course and flew to Munich. Airmen who had served with the R.A.F. during the war, in several cases managed to get hold of machines and flew straight to the airfields in Britain from which they had flown on their bombing missions to Germany.

The war-time Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, and later one of the Deputy Prime Ministers, Msgr. Jan Šrámek, the leader of the Catholic Party, was less fortunate. He was caught with the former Minister of Posts, Msgr. Hála, trying to board a French plane at a small airport in Southern Bohemia.

I have a friend in Prague—a railway official—who is a patriot of the best possible type. The *putsch* was still taking place when he came to our flat and offered to take me out of the country on a goods-train. I later decided to take the route I have already described. But my friend, whose name was Zdenek, promised to write. He kept his word. I should like to reproduce part of his letters, as I feel they give an honest picture of what a typical middle-class employee feels nowadays in our enslaved country. On 1st May he wrote:

"To-day is 1st May, Labour Day, the day of the working people. We are at home now, in spite of the fact that we ought still to be among those who were ordered to celebrate in the streets. Those masses of people really do not know what to do. Some are laughing at it—and the rest are marching with closed lips, wishing they were sitting at home, so that they could not see what was going on. In the eyes of the people lining the streets you can see tears, tears of pity for the spectacle of an unhappy nation being played before them. . . .

"As a whole the nation is patient, and believes a change must come and that the West will again come to our aid. At the moment we just wait for the least encouragement over the B.B.C. . . ."

That is what the change has meant to the small man. Either he signs for voluntary work in brigades which go to the country on Sunday to help in farming or forestry or maintenance work on the mines. Or he signs to go and hail the Government in a procession, waving flags and voting resolutions for further nationalisation or land reforms. Why must he sign on for these "voluntary" duties? So that the workers' committees can check up to see who are the "traitors" to the people's democracy—and while walking to the assembly point, our friend might see in the streets of Prague, or elsewhere, a procession of frontier guards with dogs, just to remind him what to expect should he suddenly change his mind and try to slip over the border. Another alter-

native for him if he doesn't knuckle under is the now officially admitted labour camps.

The courts—also purged of all lawyers, judges and functionaries who are not Communists or sympathisers, are busy. Forty-six members of the police force who had carried out their duty in reporting anti-State activities by the Communist Party before the *putsch*, were tried together. The sentences were ruthless. Youngsters from fifteen to twenty years of age were sentenced to many years of hard labour. A typical case was reported in the press from Jablonec, a North Bohemian town, famous for its production of bijouterie. Five young men and a twenty-year-old girl established a group of the old Czech Socialist Party, to work for the liberation of Czechoslovakia. Even the Communist press admitted that there was more spirit of adventure than of real political significance in the venture, which used the code name "SONIA". They got as far as issuing one poster against the Government when they were arrested. The boys were sentenced to eight, seven and a half, seven, and two years and eight months of hard labour, and the girl to one year. It was also announced that a further twelve members of the group, of ages varying from fifteen to twenty years, had been arrested and would be tried for distributing copies of the poster. The newspaper remarked, with some cynicism, that the group was active for only a few days. The total punishment might well be over fifty years of hard labour—for one poster!

The same newspaper—*Lidové Noviny* of 18th September 1948—carries a leading article called "Hypocrites" by a Communist journalist of long-standing, Stanislav Budin, who throughout the war was a refugee in the U.S.A. He complained that "the whole Western press never published even the smallest note about the amnesty which has emptied the prisons in Czechoslovakia because it was not in keeping with the news published about the Communist terror in Czechoslovakia". Mr. Budin reads the British press daily, and very carefully, for it is his specific task to abuse it, but he deliberately omitted to mention that on 21st June *The Times* had forty lines under the headline "Czech Amnesty", and similar reports appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*, *News Chronicle*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Reynolds News*. He provided a good example of the freedom of information and reliability of the press under Communist rule. And when one got down to brass tacks, the so-called "amnesty" was merely a measure necessitated by lack of space to weed out the politically unimportant prisoners from the overflowing prisons.

A number of British journalists were expelled from the Republic or refused facilities to return there, among them Karl Robson of the *News Chronicle*, Alec Lawrenson of the *Telegraph*

and Patrick Smith of the B.B.C. Mr. Robson had been the first to report the appearance of an underground newspaper. . . .

The Communist propaganda on the home front was not long after the *putsch* given into the hands of Jiri Hronek, who in 1947 had been elected Secretary of the International Organisation of Journalists, and for whom the office of Director of Information was created in the autumn of 1948. At the time of writing he is in charge of the official press agency, C.T.K. He controls the supply of information to the Czechoslovak press, and he watches the writings of the foreign press on Czechoslovakia. During the war he had been a member of the staff of the B.B.C., but now did not hesitate to say that Sir Bruce Lockhart's broadcasts over the B.B.C. after the crisis were the acts of an enemy. This was regardless of Sir Bruce Lockhart's friendship with Masaryk, and the immense popularity of his broadcasts with the Czech people, particularly in recent months.

In the circumstances the May elections in 1948 could hardly be expected to proceed normally. But no one imagined the Communists would copy their Nazi predecessors to such an extent. It is no exaggeration to say that they were a repetition of the German elections of the Third Reich, in 1934, as I saw them carried out in Leipzig. There the elector had a single list of candidates, to which he could say "ja" or "nein". In the case of the Communist elections of 1948 in Czechoslovakia the elector could choose between the governmental list of candidates, or a blank voting form, expressing his disagreement with the list. No matter how many voted against the list, neither the Nazis nor the Communists allowed them any representation. In any case, anyone who dared to vote against the Government was declared in advance to be a traitor. It was also arranged, so as to give people a chance of demonstrating their loyalty to the new regime, that they should vote in the open, and not behind the screen. This made it obvious that anyone who still used the screen was voting against the list, and was a "traitor". It took a lot of courage to do it, and under these conditions the number officially admitted to have used blank or invalid forms or abstained from voting, which was compulsory—1,573,924—was very high. It was already one-fifth of the electorate. And many people who escaped from Czechoslovakia after the elections brought news of electorates where 60 per cent or more had used blank votes, according to the evidence of people employed on counting, but results such as these were not announced. In some cases the results were just reversed, and in others they were purely fictitious. Resistance to the governmental list was most marked in the regions close to the Soviet border, in Slovakia. In the village of Namestovo in Eastern Slovakia, of the population of 655 only 225 voted for

the list and 410 against. By some leakage in the secrecy enveloping the count, these figures got into the newspaper. An English girl who had become Czech by her marriage, who arrived in England in June, told me she had voted for the Communist list because she did not want to cause trouble for her husband's family. Such was the character of the "free" elections where totalitarianism was masked as "National Unity".

Just before election day in the Republic, on 28th May 1948, a meeting was held in the Caxton Hall in London, of the Czechoslovak M.P.s who had been elected in the free elections of 1946 and who, after the *putsch*, had to flee the country to avoid imprisonment for their opposition to Communism. They already numbered close on forty,<sup>1</sup> and a good proportion of these were able to attend, including the three Secretaries-General of the non-Communist parties. The Secretary of the Slovak Democratic Party was already in the United States. The assembly, which included many prominent British friends of Czechoslovakia, was addressed by Mr. Wickham Steed, who had been a close friend of Thomas Masaryk. It was for the third time in his life he had addressed a group of Czechoslovaks who were facing a struggle for the liberation of their country. He urged them to lay aside party differences and unite in their work, as only a well-organised political body could fulfil the task lying ahead.

The resolution passed by the meeting declared that the Czechoslovak Republic had again lost her independence, by treachery and by force and by the interference of the Soviet Union. The resolution described the unconstitutional election procedure, repudiated the new Constitution, and ended with the promise that "until such time as the Czech and Slovak peoples will have an opportunity of expressing their will freely and democratically, the members of the Constitutional National Assembly consider it their duty to continue their work as the political representatives of the nation, and will, regardless of party, strive for the return of freedom to their country in the spirit of the principles of the President Liberator, Thomas Garrigue Masaryk".

At the beginning of June Zdenek wrote to me:

"I have to come back to the elections. One of my friends was trying to put up some posters, and was not careful enough. He was caught and taken to police headquarters for questioning. . . . The poster he was putting up read: 'Vote blank now, clear conscience later'. I had known him for years. He was always the kind of man who liked to follow his own inclination, and to do what he thought was right. I am not surprised he decided to support the blank voting form. His wife was just bathing

<sup>1</sup> By the end of 1948 some 60 M.P.s, 7 former Cabinet Ministers, some 20 Generals and many senior Civil Servants had managed to escape.



the baby three days later when a policeman called. He said simply:

"I am sorry to inform you that your husband has committed suicide by jumping out of the window when escorted to his questioning.' Now we have to look after the poor widow.

"Arrests are a daily occurrence, our daily bread is to be spiced upon, and the amount of work required from us is already unbearable. We are glad to see that even the Communists are finding the pressure too much for their enthusiasm. I wish the brotherly British Government had enough shipping to send all its Communists into the Bolshevik paradise—they would soon be cured."

The news coming through from Czechoslovakia in the months after the elections told of the growing discontent among the rank and file of the Communist Party, as the party bosses quickly assumed the privileges of a ruling class, living in confiscated villas, driven about in smart automobiles, and spending their holidays abroad. They were already known to the people as the "new aristocracy", having little in common with the promised "dictatorship of the working class".

Gottwald was now installed in the Castle in Beneš's place, but retained his leadership of the Communist Party. The fourth President of the Republic had had a chequered career on his way up to this political peak. In the early years of the Republic he was arrested for seditious activities, and managed to get away to the Soviet Union. In 1935 he profited from Beneš's presidential amnesty and returned home, soon to declare that Masaryk and Beneš were preparing a Fascist dictatorship in Czechoslovakia. In 1938, as an M.P., he voted against the extraordinary credits proposed for the improvement of Army equipment, in the face of the aggressive policy of Germany. At one time he incited the working people against the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance. When the Soviet-Czechoslovak pact was concluded, after his return to the Republic, the Soviet Government suddenly lost interest in him, and even notified the Government in Prague that if he proved too troublesome he could be arrested.<sup>1</sup> During the war Gottwald was in Moscow again, although he had no official status until Beneš included him in the Czechoslovak delegation in 1943 for the negotiations for the new pact of friendship. During the *putsch* of February 1948 the attitude of Gottwald to Beneš was that of the ruthless determination typical of a Marxist doctrine. As with most Communists, his actions belied his softly-spoken words. He was waiting for the kill.

<sup>1</sup>A similar policy was adopted after the conclusion of the Soviet-German treaty in 1939, when the U.S.S.R. showed no interest in the fate of the German Communists who continued to be persecuted or to languish in prison just as they had before the pact.

Measured by the Communist yardstick, Gottwald was a successful man. He had gained his point that the State should exist to serve only the interests of the party, whose intentions for the future were expressed in a secret instruction issued in the summer of 1948 to District Secretariats. It read:

"Confidential—

"In June further steps must be taken to carry out socialisation, on similar lines to those of the U.S.S.R. Leading positions in economic life must be occupied by pre-war members of the Party. Where the choice of reliable Communist experts is limited, there must be special control of officials appointed. Former members of the Czech Socialist Party must be neutralised in minor positions.

"Youth faithful to the regime must have the best possible education. Others are of no interest. All remarks hostile to the regime must be reported without delay; also instances of the spreading of news of foreign origin. Where necessary, youth of the opposite sex must be used to break the will in individual cases of opposition. In case of failure, resisting elements must be sent to special labour camps.

"A long-term exchange of youth with Soviet Russia is under preparation. These steps will help to safeguard and strengthen the regime sooner than in the other countries of the people's democratic system.

"Further confidential instructions will follow."

Nothing of this can surprise people who have read *The Principles of Leninism*. But I wonder how many of the opponents of Communism—who ought to know them—are really familiar with them.

Later on in June came the defiance of the nation-wide physical fitness organisation, Sokol, at their great rally. Since it was a genuinely non-political movement, inspired by nationalist ideals foreign to the disciples of the internationalist and totalitarian system, the Sokol organisation had been a thorn in the Communist side since the liberation. Their attempts to penetrate it had failed. Even the purge to which it was subjected immediately after the *putsch*, in which Mr. Antonín Hřebík, M.P., was one of the first victims (he had to flee the country), failed to break its spirit. My friend Zdeněk attended one of the displays given by the members, of whom several hundred thousand had come to Prague for the rally. He wrote to me on June 23rd:

"The Sokol 'slet' (rally) has begun. Our youth cried: 'Long live President Beneš', 'We want Beneš in the Castle and not in his garden' or 'The Plzeň black country is faithful to Beneš'. This

happened while Gottwald, Zápotocký and Nejedlý were there. As they marched past the grand-stand the Sokols looked the other way. We wondered what would happen about it. I saw two men arrested among the onlookers because they burst into laughter when the Sokols turned their heads away from Gottwald. People who saw them arrested began to hiss.

"We had all been forbidden to take folding chairs to the stadium—they were afraid they might be used to attack the police. . . ."

This fear of the wrath of the masses was betrayed openly at the funeral of Dr. Beneš, when extraordinary armed police precautions were taken to prevent any outbreak. The measures taken were announced to the public in advance in the form of a threat. The Government could not have admitted more plainly that their claim that the whole nation was solidly backing the new regime was without foundation, or that Beneš was against them and the people knew it.

Deputy Prime Minister Zenkl, who was an intended victim of the bomb-plot, and who managed to escape from the country in July, despite the guards who lived, ate and slept with him, said to me: "Never before were the leaders of the people so frightened of the people as they are now in our country, although they insist on calling it a 'people's democracy'." He described the elaborate system of police protection, and the incredible number of guards, both plain-clothed and uniformed, employed to safeguard the members of the Government.

The Communist leaders kept up an incessant exchange of visits with the other countries of the Soviet bloc in an almost feverish attempt to satisfy the Kremlin's demands for the constant manifestation of political understanding and economic co-operation within the Soviet sphere of influence. An agreement was made with Poland to develop the Silesian mining basin into an industrial area mightier than the Ruhr had been. Czechoslovakia would deliver the machinery and tools and Poland the raw materials and labour. The result would serve to strengthen the Soviet war-potential. But this economic and strategical necessity could be achieved only if the countries concerned reached agreement on their territorial claims. On advice from Moscow, Czechoslovakia gave up her claim on the former German, but now Polish-controlled regions in Hlutschin, Ratibor and Kladsko, which formed enclaves of foreign territory into the body of Czechoslovakia, while Poland gave up her claim on the Teschen area, which had been a cause for justified bitterness on the part of the Czechs when Poland occupied it soon after Munich with Hitler's blessing.

The terms of this agreement were disclosed by Mr. Vilém Nový, an M.P. and Editor-in-Chief of *Rude Pravo* during his attendance at the Congress of the Inter-Parliamentarian Union in Italy. In an unguarded moment he also informed a former Czechoslovak diplomat that agreement had been sought with Hungary on the problem of exchange of minorities. Czechoslovakia would be satisfied to exchange only a hundred thousand of her citizens of Hungarian nationality for Slovaks living in Hungary, whereas previously a transfer of several hundred thousand had been planned. The remaining Hungarians would still be given the opportunity of instruction in their own language in the lower-grade schools. Mr. Nový's disclosures—and as Chairman of the Parliamentary Foreign Committee he was well-informed—were just another example that the Soviets were using a firm hand with their satellites.<sup>1</sup> It will be difficult for the Communist regime to explain to the public this sudden change of front in retreating from claims which were formerly declared to be irrevocable.

All these moves, together with the constantly deteriorating economic situation, and the tightening grip of the police State upon its citizens, as well as the ruthless suppression of news from abroad, can have only one outcome: the growth of the underground movement and sabotage, leading to further reprisals, trials, and victims of the peculiar Communist "justice".

In Znojmo a group of priests was arrested on the charge of helping people to escape to Austria. There were not less than thirty charges against one priest. Professors and pupils were arrested all over the country, mainly in connection with the illegal production of posters and leaflets. In Ustí, in North Bohemia, students at the local Grammar School were arrested, interrogated and imprisoned on similar charges.

The determined, patriotic, and courageous stand of the Church under the leadership of Archbishop Beran is most encouraging. While the other churches—the Czechoslovak, Jewish, and some of the Protestant sects—found no other solution than to declare their support of the Governmental list of candidates, the Catholic Church remained impartial, and indeed appealed that everyone should act according to his conscience.

To the Communist way of thinking a negative attitude to their doctrine is synonymous with opposition—"Who is not with us is against us". Therefore a series of attempts were made to bring the Catholic Church to heel (80 per cent of the population belong to it). These attempts were bound to fail. Either the Church would remain free of Communist influence, or there would no longer be a Catholic Church in Czechoslovakia. Dr.

<sup>1</sup> He disclosed many secrets to our Minister in Italy, Dr. Jan Pauliny-Tóth, who has since resigned.

Cepička, the new Minister of Justice, notorious for his outrages against religion and the Church, was chosen by the Government as the chief intermediary between the Church and the Government.

The Archbishop directed the following letter to be read in all the churches of his diocese on Sunday, 20th June

"At a time when the State has received new leadership I feel I must proclaim clearly the following principles

"(1) The Church is not an institution for the organisation of political agreement or disagreement

"(2) The Church cannot prevent anyone from asking the Lord's help in his deeds if he wishes

"(3) In all seriousness I remind you that in so doing the Church does not accept the conception of the world maintained by movements which are in opposition to its principles

"(4) Even if the Church shows good will and co operation in a common struggle for the solution of the present problems, it can never betray its own mission which is to make clear what is Christian and what is un-Christian. In the name of this mission evil must be branded whoever commits it

"(5) I urge all people of good faith to stand firmly behind the Holy Father and their Archbishop and clergy. I remind you all that it is not always possible to give detailed and concrete instructions in every case, in every Christian must live a Christian conscience and he himself has a personal responsibility in accordance with the spiritual development of a convinced Christian

"(6) Educate yourself with greater energy than until now in the Catholic learning, in the principles of Christian social justice! Heed the preaching of the Holy Father!

"Pray for your country and for the Kingdom of God in the Slav World! Appease by your repentance God's justice for public faults and sins. Our help is in the name of God!

"JOSEF—Archbishop"

Long correspondence was conducted between the Archbishop and Dr Cepička, especially in the case of Father Plojhar, the Minister of Health, who stood in the May elections without the permission of his Superior and was therefore asked to retire from political activity, or he must be suspended from celebrating Mass and performing other religious duties. So it happened that Father Plojhar was suspended, but the Communist Party organised a campaign of protest against the decision. It went so far that the Archbishop of Prague, for instance, was deprived of membership in the Organisation of Warriors for Freedom, to which he belonged

by merit of his war-time activities and of his five years of suffering in German concentration camps.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party issued secret instructions on relations with the Church, from which I should like to quote:

"(a) *Vatican*: The confidence of the people must be destroyed by attacks, especially in the daily press.

"(b) *Clergy*: The higher and lower clergy must be split. A wedge must also be driven between the clergy and their followers. The clergy must be induced to join a new national church. Any opposing it must be won over, even if the opposite sex has to be asked to influence them.

"(c) *Church Commissions*: Their task is not to establish co-operation with the Catholic Church, but to conduct affairs without the Church."

There was no doubt that the struggle of the Church led by a warrior like Dr. Beran would go down to history as part of the battle of the Church for its survival.

At the time Mr. Gottwald assumed the Presidential office, Dr. Beran called together a meeting of the Bishops, who sent to the new President an appeal which was also signed by the Primates of Moravia and Slovakia. The letter read:

"Mr. President,

"We are fully aware, and are often reminded, that according to Christ's words 'Render unto Caesar the things that be Caesar's' we have important obligations towards the State of which you have been elected President. We assure you that these obligations will be fulfilled faithfully, as our belief and conscience demands.

"At the same time we do not forget, that Christ's teaching also has a second command: 'And unto God the things which be God's'. This order, too, lays duties on us which we must fulfil faithfully and without hesitation together with all Catholic clergy and Catholic people, we being their Catholic Bishops.

"We hope therefore that religious freedom, as guaranteed by the new Constitution, will be fully respected. The religious schools, press and societies, especially the Catholic 'Charitas', are inseparable parts of our religious life, and we therefore trust that in these matters, too, full understanding will be reached as soon as possible. . . . This is necessary in the interests of our good relations with the Holy See, with which we are closely associated and to which we have sworn allegiance. Unfounded attacks on

the Holy Father in the press and by the public are causing pain among Catholics and we would wish that these transgressions are corrected. . . ."

The letter was signed by the Archbishop of Prague (for Bohemia), the Archbishop of Olomouc (for Moravia), and the Bishop of Banská Bystrica (for Slovakia).

One of the latest addresses by the Archbishop to the Slovak clergy finished with the words:

"I am proud to be a simple son of the Czech nation and proud of my war-time sufferings as a Czech and as a clergyman. I tell you frankly that I shall never betray my nation. I am as sure of it as I am that there will be no traitors among the clergy. You will remain at your posts for the sake of the nation. Communism cannot be compared with Christianity. He who attempts to do so does not know history, or means to joke. Christian principles must always be in line with the law of God. Therefore those who believe the law of God cannot accept an ideology based on a political programme and not on eternal laws. No man, and, furthermore, no clergyman, can recognise an ideology which does not believe in eternal life. . . . I trust you and I am convinced that nothing will make you desert your Bishops. I pray for you, and I shall help you to bear the heavy cross of your mission!"

The Church has since been deprived of her property, and religious schools have either been closed or their teachers exchanged; the religious press, in the main, has been banned, but the cold war between the Church and the State goes on.

The Communists have also paid close attention, of course, to the teaching of history. Their baseness has not stopped with obliterating inconvenient facts, but they have also falsified them. It is typical that they declare that the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 was inspired by the Russian October Revolution of 1917, but ignore the fact that Mr. Vyshinsky once attacked the Czechoslovak leaders for fighting the Bolsheviks for almost two years after their 1917 Revolution.

The same picture is found in almost every branch of public life and institutions. The Army and Air Force, with a fine record of war service on almost all the battlefronts of the last war, has been reorganised and purged of nearly every man who served with the British and who remained faithful to democracy. Some twenty-five leading Generals were dismissed in the time of the *putsch*, and twenty of them have reached freedom. Several were caught while escaping. The most tragic fate is that of Air Vice-Marshal Karel Janoušek, who commanded the Czechoslovak

Air Force during the war. He was arrested while attempting to escape, tried, and sentenced to death. Because of his war service his sentence was then commuted to eighteen years' imprisonment, and his rank was stripped from him. He still holds the rank of British Air Vice-Marshal, however. Over 5,000 officers and N C O s of the Army and Air Force were dismissed altogether, and General Hasal, who was chief military adviser to President Beneš, declared, after his escape to Germany in the summer of 1948, that even after this purge the Army was still considered by the Soviets to be unreliable. General Svoboda, the Minister of National Defence, had little to say in Army affairs, and it was only because he had been played so high in the post war period that he was able to maintain his position, at least nominally. It is well known that Mr. Slánský, M P, Secretary-General of the Party, and General Reicin, the Moscow-trained chief of the Secret Service who rose in a few months from the rank of a junior officer to one of the leading positions in the Army, had become the real power in what now survives of what was once an efficient safeguard of the national existence.

The state of the diplomatic service abroad perhaps best reflects the gloomy situation in Czechoslovakia.

As soon as the course of events in February became known abroad there were wholesale resignations among the Czechoslovak diplomatic representatives. Among them were the Ambassadors in Washington and Paris, the Ministers in Oslo, Berne, The Hague and in Mexico, the Consul in Melbourne, the secretary in London, and dozens of others. When Mr. Masaryk committed suicide, Dr. Papánek, Ambassador and permanent delegate to U N O, made his appeal to the Security Council. Many more of his colleagues thereupon left the diplomatic service and joined their protests to his. At the end of May eleven more members of the London Embassy followed the example of the courageous secretary, Miss Stranska. Some of them had waited until members of their families, who were still in the new Soviet protectorate, had made their way to safety, before they resigned. At the time I write practically the whole diplomatic staff all over the world has either resigned or been recalled. The shortage of staff in the Prague Ministry of Foreign Affairs was so acute that young men without any diplomatic experience were sent abroad to hold responsible offices and new diplomatists had to be recruited from the staff of the Trade Unions, from Communist newspapers and from the broadcasting organisation. The former General Manager of Radio Prague has been appointed Ambassador in Moscow, and his leading reporter was appointed First Secretary of the Embassy in London. Mr. Hofmeister, the famous cartoonist for instance was sent to Paris as Ambassador.



None of those refugees who escaped from the new Soviet Protectorate, or any of those members of the diplomatic service who resigned abroad, have any illusion about their future—unless Czechoslovakia is free again. Their future is not very bright because there is only one thing they are not short of—and that is courage and determination to stand up to hardship. All of them, of course, ask the same question: What of the future of Czechoslovakia? Can a nation survive, spiritually and economically, being subdued twice within ten years to an alien ideology, long periods of distorted propaganda, a different war machine, a different system of exploitation by nations with incomparably lower standards of living? And what of the youth of the country, who have seen the pictures of Masaryk and Beneš exchanged for the pictures of Hacha and Hitler, Gottwald and Stalin, within ten years, and who were first forced to learn German, and then Russian?

I doubt whether there is any fundamental difference between the brown terror which overran Czechoslovak soil in 1938 and the red regime installed in 1948, which had been spreading its web from the day my countrymen celebrated their liberation from the first tyranny.

As a friend of the Czechs and Slovaks, Professor R. W. Seton-Watson recorded for the English-speaking world *A history of the Czechs and Slovaks*, and the final chapter of this work deals with the German betrayal of Czechoslovakia. When he wrote it he had in mind all those official assurances Goering made from Berlin, when, after the annexation of Austria, he gave his word of honour to the Czechoslovak Ambassador that his country need have no concern—and Henlein's many declarations in London that he had no intention of destroying the unity of Czechoslovakia. He commented:

"... and then, on 14th September, on Hitler's orders, Henlein suddenly threw off the mask, fled to Germany and proclaimed his adherence to a full-fledged separatist programme. This tale of perfidy should ever be present in the minds of those who will have to deal with the Sudeten Germans after the war."

The heart of every Czech and Slovak patriot must sink when he hears the reports of the Communist meetings held all over Germany, and especially in the Eastern Zone, where the claims for the return of the Germans to Czechoslovakia are put forward publicly, and certainly not without the approval of the Kremlin. "Eastern Germany has been denazified and demilitarised", the Moscow radio spokesman has repeated more and more often. We may consider that it is only a matter of time before the representatives of the Eastern Zone are invited to join the Cominform. Moscow is already commanding the satellite countries

that agreement must be reached with the Germans because the Americans are prepared to use them against the Slavs.

Mr. Gottwald, while still Prime Minister, declared that "Czechoslovakia's road to Socialism need not necessarily lead to Moscow—Czechoslovakia will go her own way!" In February 1948 he, too, "threw off the mask", in obedience to the voice of Valerian Alexandrovitch Zorin, to stage the *coup d'état* and betray his country.

There Mr. Stalin made a blunder. Once again the tragedy of Czechoslovakia, brought about by the skilful exploitation of the weakness of the Western Powers, opened the eyes of the world, and she acted as the shock point of Europe. Finland rid herself of her Communist Minister of the Interior and doubled her efforts to remain free of Communist interference in her internal affairs. Italy carried out her parliamentary elections and defeated the Communists. In Yugoslavia Marshal Tito took courage and defied the Kremlin when he found the basic interests of his country were at stake. In Britain the order went out that Communists were no longer to be employed on secret work in the Government Departments.

And in Czechoslovakia, in spite of all the measures to suppress or misrepresent them, the true feelings of the people still find outlet. The Sokol Rally was not the first example of this. In Plzen, a month earlier, on the anniversary of the liberation of the town by the American forces on 6th May 1945, students placed flowers and American, British, and Czechoslovak flags, on the lawn surrounding the monument to the Americans who died on Czech soil. There were also pictures of Roosevelt, and U.S. Generals, alongside those of Masaryk and Beneš. In daylight thousands of townsfolk came to the spot, bearing more flowers and flags and pictures, till by evening the grass had disappeared under the piles of tributes and there were some twenty thousand onlookers, who stood round, happy in their growing conviction that they were united in their resistance to the oppressors. Then the police, instructed from Prague, came with lorries to clear away the decorations, leaving guards to warn people away from the now deserted square. Hundreds of people were arrested, but a number managed to develop photographs, which they had taken at great risk, of the lawn, before and after the police intervened. The photographs were circulated all over the Republic and some even reached London. One day I received seventeen of them with a message attached:

"I, a student born in Prague on 7th November 1925 and studying in Plzen, am responsible for the enclosed photographs. I have asked an English gentleman, until now unknown to me,

who introduced himself as Mr. Bedford of London, to take these pictures out of the country, so that the world might know that we are thankful to our liberators and shall never forget the true meaning of freedom and democracy.

"In paying tribute to the fallen American heroes we are carrying out an act of gratitude to them. We feel it our duty to warn the outside world because the Red danger, unless fought and stopped, will continue to endanger and swallow other countries and other nations. We are risking imprisonment and even our lives, and we therefore hope that we shall not be overlooked, misunderstood or given up. We will fight, but we need your help. We are even prepared to die, but we would like to know that our sacrifice will not be in vain. Long live the memory of the American Army! Long live the eternal brotherhood of truly democratic nations. Long live our beloved Czechoslovak Republic! Truth shall prevail!"

That is the spirit of our people, and that is why they will ultimately triumph.

Since I reached Britain at the end of April I have been asked many times: "What are the chances of your country being free and independent again?" Everything depended, and will depend, on future relations between the East and the West, between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S.A. But we know that if Soviet Russia is left to decide our fate alone, she will never tolerate a democratic country on her doorstep.

The thought of war is appalling, and because I believe it is as unwanted by the Russians as it is by the rest of the world, and that the present policy of her leaders is more the result of fear than of strength, I am convinced that there are other effective means of saving mankind from Czechoslovakia's fate. Her downfall brought the world nearer to war and to the realisation that the struggle was not over. In this struggle the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia, because it warned the world in time, may well be the determining factor for the triumph of world freedom.

Jan Masaryk said that another war could "slip the world back from the Atomic Age to the Stone Age in a matter of weeks". There is no other alternative but a strong and effective world organisation, strong enough to make the United Nations Charter a law for all, including the Kremlinites with their threat to extend indefinitely the grip they have on their own nation and those behind the Iron Curtain.

We learned during the last war that collective security is indivisible—security for all or for none. So is peace indivisible, and as long as there is no law or peace for the unhappy Czechoslovak people there cannot be peace for anyone. And the distance

between Britain and Czechoslovakia is, as Mr. Eden pointed out, no further than from Land's End to John o' Groats.

I am keeping the keys of our flat in Prague. I shall need them sooner or later. I do not think that even the Kremlin lords want to take us all back to the Stone Age—but if they do not awake, the rest of the world will make them. And that decision will be the beginning of my way home, back to Czechoslovakia.

# Index

## A

- Action Committees, 115-16, 124-6, 130, 132, 138, 143-4, 152, 169-71, 202  
 Albania, 193  
 Alexander, A. V., First Lord of Admiralty, 15  
 Alexeev, Mr (U.N.R.R.A.), 65  
*American Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, 15  
 Antonov, General (U.S.S.R.), 46  
 Arce, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 182  
 Argentine, 182, 198  
 Arnold, General (U.S.A.), 160  
 Attlee, Prime Minister, 177  
 Auerbach, Photo Reporter, xii, 97  
 Auston, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 194, 198, 200  
 Australia, 246  
 Austria, 18, 67, 98, 132, 140, 158, 187, 191, 193, 203, 212, 219, 242, 247

## B

- B.B.C., 32-3, 36, 74-5, 125, 148, 150, 155-6, 235, 237  
 Bandera, Colonel (Banderovits), 95, 140  
 Bečko, Minister, 30  
 Belgium, 35, 182, 194, 198  
 Benes, Eduard, President, viii, ix, 16-22, 28-38, 41-4, 48-52, 60-8, 79-80, 90, 94, 98, 102, 103, 106, 111-13, 116-20, 122, 124, 126-8, 131-52, 158-9, 162, 166, 169, 170, 171, 173, 176, 178, 179, 182, 184-93, 202, 213-30, 239-41, 246-8  
 Benes, Jan, 224  
 Benes, Vojta, Deputy, 131  
 Benes, Hana, 152, 221, 226  
 Beran, Archbishop, 133-4, 148, 242-5  
 Berna, Chief of Secret Police (U.S.S.R.), 99  
 Bernálek, Dr., 22, 126-7  
 Bevin, Ernest, 178  
 Bidault, M., 151  
 Bismarck, Chancellor, viii  
 Boček-Chodský, General, 67, 130, 137, 152  
 Bonnet, M., 28  
 Borek, Ambassador, 131, 169, 176  
 Britain, vi, 15-18, 21, 29, 31, 34, 48, 51, 56, 66-7, 101-2, 127, 137, 148, 150, 155-8, 160, 166, 172, 174-5, 177-8, 182, 191-3, 198-9, 202-5, 213, 216, 220, 222, 223, 227, 229, 231, 233, 235-9, 245-50  
 British Council, 96

- British Czechoslovak Friendship League, 233  
 British Information Service, Prague, 102, 150  
 Brno Social Democratic Congress, 80, 82, 94, 131, 148, 225  
 Brown, W. J., M.P., 53  
 Budín, Stanislav, Journalist, 236  
 Bulgaria, 39, 89, 162, 193, 195, 219  
 Bundža, Dr., Deputy, 104, 110  
 Byrnes, Secretary of State, 189

## C

- C.I.C., 212-13  
 C.T.K., Press Agency, 107, 114, 119, 237  
 Cadogan, Sir Alexander, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 192, 194-5, 198  
 Canada, 192, 198  
 Capek, Josef and Karel, 52  
 Central Planning Commission, 72  
 Čepička, Minister, 79, 82, 90-1, 130, 148, 232, 243  
 Černý, Minister, 213  
 Chamberlain, Prime Minister, 17, 18, 22  
 Caritas, 244  
 Chicago University, 65  
 Chile, 179-83, 193-200  
 China, 99, 182, 191, 198-9  
 Chmelat, Mr., 169, 202  
*Christian Science Monitor*, 74  
 Churchill, Prime Minister, 15, 18, 21, 36, 39, 48, 159, 164, 211  
 Chýle, Dr., 131  
 Cizek, Deputy, 87, 149, 213, 216  
 Clementis, Minister, 30, 32, 42-3, 90, 107, 115, 130, 148, 162-3, 167, 176  
 Colombia, 182, 194, 198  
 Columbia University, 49, 154  
 Cominform, 91-2, 98-9, 146, 231, 247  
*Communist*, 37  
 Constitution, 115, 218-19, 221-5  
 Crossmann, M.P., 232  
 Cruz, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 181, 194  
 Cyrankiewicz, Prime Minister, 68

## D

- Daily Graphic*, 127, 149  
*Daily Mail*, 149  
*Daily Mirror*, 149  
*Daily Telegraph*, 236-7  
 Daladier, Minister, 27, 28  
 Dalluge, Police General, 137

Davenport, Marcia, 167, 172-3  
 David, Speaker of the House of Deputies,  
 43, 124, 140, 219  
 Deane, General (U.S.A.), 46  
 Delacroix, Ambassador, 17  
 Denmark, 68  
 Dill, Sir John, 160  
 Dimitroff, Prime Minister, 89  
 Dolansky, Minister, 90, 147  
 Drábek, Dr., 47, 101, 197, 213  
 Drda, Journalist, 17  
 Druna, Dr., Minister, 38, 50, 69, 75-7,  
 87, 103, 112, 126, 129, 171, 190, 219,  
 234  
 Ducháček, Dr., Deputy, 29, 197  
 Duff Cooper, Mr., 15  
 Duriš, Minister, 43, 81, 90, 93, 147  
 Dutch East Indies, 99

## E

E.R.P. (European Reconstruction Pro-  
 gramme—Marshall Plan), 68, 70, 76,  
 94, 98, 109, 162  
 Ečer, General, 137  
 Eden, Anthony, 15, 150, 250  
 Egypt, 72, 216  
 Eichelberger (W.F.U.N.A.), 161  
 Eisenhower, General, 45, 46  
 Euseb, Mr., 219  
 Election results, 67, 237-8  
 Elizabeth, The Princess, 102  
 Erban, Minister, 61, 91, 147

## F

Factory militia, 64  
 Farmers' Union (Rally or Congress of  
 Agricultural Committees), 62, 91, 95,  
 115, 234  
 Feierabend, Dr., Minister, 30  
 Feigl, Mr., Journalist, 29  
 Fejencik, General, 43  
 Fierlinger, Prime Minister, 35, 42, 43,  
 80, 82, 91, 93, 94, 111, 121, 131, 134,  
 143, 147-8, 185-8, 196, 225  
 Finland, 98, 138, 151, 248  
 Firt, Mr., Deputy, 197  
 Formis, Dr., 47  
 France, 15-17, 21, 27-31, 35, 48, 63, 68,  
 84, 98, 101, 137, 146-50, 160, 162, 166,  
 172, 182, 191, 194-5, 198-9, 214, 235,  
 239, 246  
 Franěk, Minister, 112  
 Frank, Karl Herrmann, 31-3, 87

## G

Gallup Poll, 100-1  
 Germany, 16-18, 21-2, 30-4, 42-7, 50-1,  
 57-8, 60, 62, 64, 68, 83-4, 89, 96,  
 109-10, 122, 132, 135-7, 151, 154,  
 156-7, 162, 167-8, 176, 180, 197, 203,

208, 212-13, 215, 217, 219, 227, 234,  
 235, 237, 239, 241, 246-7  
 Gestapo, 26, 32  
 Glaser, Dr., Journalist, x  
 Goebbels, Dr., 17  
 Golan, General, 39  
 Göring, Marshal, 137, 247  
 Gottwald, President, 32, 36, 42-4, 69, 70,  
 72-3, 82, 90, 92, 106-9, 111-30, 134,  
 139-43, 146-9, 151, 170, 175, 182, 185,  
 187-92, 196, 203, 216-26, 239-41, 244,  
 247-8  
 Greece, 35, 191, 219  
 Gregor, Minister, 147, 149  
 Gromyko, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 183,  
 193-4, 198-9  
 Groza, Prime Minister, 107, 193  
 Guderian, General, 113  
 Gundorov, General, 191

## H

Hácha, President, 21, 70, 101, 247  
 Hajdu, Ambassador, 58, 169, 176  
 Hala, Mgr., Minister, 38, 112, 235  
 Halifax, Lord, 22  
 Hasal-Nuborsky, General, 43, 137, 152,  
 220, 246  
 Henlein, Mr. (and his Party), 16-17, 88,  
 247  
 Herben, Ivan, Journalist, x, 52, 213  
 Heydrich, Police General, 31, 147-8  
 Hummler, Heinrich, 148  
 Hindustan, 99  
 Huder, Adolf, viii, 15-16, 18, 21, 34, 52,  
 57, 89, 92, 97, 101, 150-1, 155, 157,  
 195, 202, 216, 241, 247  
 Hlinka Guards, 24, 26  
 Hlutschin (Hlučín), 241  
 Hodža, Prime Minister, 16  
 Hoffmeister, Ambassador, 246  
 Holland, 203, 246  
 Holub, Deputy, 111  
 Hornola, Deputy, 99  
 Hora, Deputy, 77, 87, 104, 149, 213, 216  
 Houdek, Dr., Ambassador (U.N.O.), 182  
 Hřebek, Deputy, 240  
 Hronek, Jiří, Journalist, 64, 66, 113, 237  
 Hurban, Ambassador, 167, 173  
 Hsu, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 199  
 Hungary, viii, 15, 18, 21, 24, 26-8, 39, 56,  
 60, 98, 153, 159, 168, 187, 191, 193,  
 195, 219, 242

## I

I.O.J. (International Organisation of  
 Journalists), 161, 237  
 Ignatieff, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 182  
 Illustrated, 97, 149  
 India, 191  
 Indo-China, 99

Information Service of Free Czechoslovakia, 223  
 Ingr, General, 30, 131  
 Iran, 216  
 Israel, 231  
 Italy, 15, 83, 98, 138, 151, 191, 219, 242, 248  
*Itzhak*, 129

## J

Jandáček, Mr, Journalist, 197  
 Jankovcová, Minister, 148  
 Janoušek, Dr, Air Vice-Marshal, 245  
 Jina, Dr, 220  
 Jowitt, Lord, 158  
 Juna, Deputy, 197

## K

Kallay, Prime Minister, 168  
 Kavan, Dr, Press Attaché, 173-4  
 Kentel, Marshal, 18, 21, 137  
 Kenyon, Archibald, President (I O J), 161  
 Khoury, Ambassador (U N O), 194-5  
 Kladsko, 241  
 Klapálek, General, 130, 137, 152  
 Klimek, Deputy, 213  
 Kliment, Minister, 225  
 Klinger, Evžen, Journalist, 114-19, 151, 169, 173-4, 202-3  
 Kočvara, Vice Prime Minister, 112  
 Konev, Marshal, 55  
 Kopecký, Jan, Minister, 112  
 Kopecký, Václav, Minister, 43, 90, 105, 120, 145, 147, 149, 188, 196  
 Kosta, Dr, 152  
 Kofice Government (Programme), 42, 43, 47, 62, 65, 91, 185-6  
 Krajčík, Minister, 147  
 Krajna, Dr, Deputy, 31, 76-8, 103, 129, 149, 197, 213, 216, 228  
 Kubát, Deputy, 110  
 Kun, Bela, 219  
 Kuttelwascher, General, 45, 186

## L

Land reform, 44, 64  
 Laštovička, Ambassador, 66, 149, 246  
 Latvia, 157  
 Laušman, Minister, 38, 40, 79  
 Lawrenson, Alec, Journalist, 237  
 League of Nations, 18, 182, 184, 214, 219  
 Lenin (and Leninism), 89, 90, 92, 147  
 Lesák, Deputy, 129  
 Lettich, Dr, 132, 167, 197  
 Lechner, Minister, 30, 43, 112  
 Lie Trigue, 179, 181  
 Liebknecht, Mr., 219  
 Liska, General, 137  
 Little Entente, 16

Latvinov, Minister, 57  
 Lobkowitz, Ambassador, 22  
 Lockhart, Sir Robert Bruce, 15, 176, 226, 237  
 Lopez, Ambassador (U N O), 194  
 Low, Cartoonist, 157  
 Luxembourg, vii, 49, 52, 137, 161, 170  
 Luxembourg, Rosa, 219  
 Lyon, Eugen, Writer, 231

## M

Masary, Ambassador, 182  
 Mayer, Minister, 36, 79-80, 84-5, 110, 117, 128, 131, 146, 156  
 Malaya, 191  
*Manchester Guardian*, 215, 236  
 Manchuria, 195  
 Marshall, Secretary of State, 68, 154  
 Marx, Karl (*Manifesto*), 87-9, 90, 147-8, 239  
 Masaryk, Jan, ix, 15, 22, 30, 42-3, 58, 65, 68-70, 72, 74-6, 107-9, 111, 115-16, 130, 145, 147, 148, 153-79, 183, 186, 189, 190, 193, 196, 197, 200, 202-3, 206, 214, 219, 226, 228, 234, 237, 246, 248-9  
 Masaryk, Thomas G, President Liberator, viii, 72, 75, 92, 98, 119, 129, 132-3, 140-1, 152, 156, 167, 173-4, 176, 184, 214, 238-9, 247  
 Masarykova, Dr Alice, 167  
 Masarykova, Henriette-Garnigue, 158  
 Maslanc, General, 191  
*Mitropole, La*, 63  
 Mexico, 246  
 Michael, King, 193  
 Makojan, Minister, 71  
 Miksche, Colonel, x, 83-4  
 Mikus, Mr, 231  
 Minorities in Czechoslovakia, 16, 59-61, 135-6, 212, 242, 247  
 Miroslav Najman, General, 137  
 Modzelewski, Minister, 109, 167-8  
 Molotov, Minister, 31, 41, 159, 186, 197  
 Moravec, Colonel, 21-2  
 Moravec, General, 137, 197, 213  
 Morrison, Herbert, 150  
 Mráz, Deputy, 100  
 Munich (party), 15, 21, 41-2, 59, 61, 102, 122, 135, 146, 150-1, 154, 158, 162, 171, 195, 200, 215-16, 227, 228, 235, 241  
 Mussolini, Benito, 157

## N

N. K. V. D. (Soviet Secret Police), 54, 105, 126, 138, 185-6, 190, 197, 213, 224  
 National Assembly, 16, 34, 65, 68, 167, 220, 223, 238, 242  
 National Committees, 36-7, 40-1, 43-4, 54, 59, 61, 82, 93, 185

National Council, 41, 132, 186  
 National Front, 63, 96, 109, 116, 121, 126, 171, 203  
 Nationalisation, 44, 62, 63, 106, 108  
 Nečas, Minister, 30  
 Nejedlý, Minister, 46, 66, 90, 147, 188, 241  
 Němec, Minister, x, 30, 36, 40-2  
 Neuman, Minister, 143  
*News Chronicle*, 152, 202, 236-7  
*New Times*, 227  
 Newton, Ambassador, 17  
*New York Times*, 132, 214-15  
 Nisot, Ambassador (U N O), 194  
 Norway, 148, 246  
 Nosek, Minister, 30, 43, 64, 77, 90, 104, 109, 111, 115, 119, 120, 126, 130, 145, 147, 187, 196  
 Novotná, Jarmila, 157  
 Nový, Vilém, Journalist, Deputy, 97, 242

## O

Očadlík, Dr., 66  
*Olczewski*, Ambassador, 173  
*Ordre, L.*, 172  
 Osuský, Minister, 30  
 Oustrata, Minister, 30

## P

Panský, President, 151  
 Pakistan, 99  
 Palestine, 72, 154  
 Papánek, Jan, Ambassador (U N O), x, 178-201, 246  
*Parallèle* 50, 81  
 Parodi, Ambassador (U N O), 194, 198  
 Partisans' Association, 139  
 Patton, General, 46  
 Pauliny-Tóth, Ambassador, 242  
 Pavlov, Soviet interpreter (U N O), 197  
 Pecháček, Joža, Press Attaché, x  
 Peroutka, Ferdinand, Journalist, 17, 52, 87  
 Petr, Minister, 130, 147  
 Peulvey, R. L., 170  
 Pietor, Minister, 42, 112, 126, 196  
 Pius XI, 235, 243  
 Platt Mills, M. F., 232  
 Plojhar, Minister, 130, 132, 143, 148, 243  
 Poland, 18, 21, 22, 30, 34-8, 43, 63, 68, 89, 99, 110, 127, 157, 160, 162, 167-8, 193, 195, 197, 219, 241  
 Poliburžo, 32, 78, 89, 100-1, 141, 146  
 Political Prisoners' Union, 62, 91  
 Potsdam (Agreement), 60, 62, 135  
 Prague University, 84, 217-18  
*Pravda*, 40, 87, 128  
 Pražák, Professor, 45, 186  
 Přikryl, General, 37-8, 40

Procházka, Adolf, Minister, 43, 112  
 Procházka, Vladimír, Deputy, 221  
 Provazníková, Marie, 227

## R

R. A. F., 119, 160, 166, 204, 208, 211, 235  
 Radescu, Prime Minister, 107  
 Radio Brno, 119  
 Radio Kiev, 40  
*Radio Luxembourg*, 49, 170, 205  
 Radio Moscow, 36, 134, 247  
 Radio Prague, 45-7, 66, 149, 173, 232, 246  
 Ratibof, 241  
 Red Army, 34, 36-40, 44, 46-9, 53-8, 67, 101, 103, 124, 132, 137, 185-7, 191, 193, 213, 233  
 Rejcin, General, 138, 196, 246  
 Reuter, 113  
*Reynolds News*, 238  
 Ripka, Hubert, Minister, 29-30, 43, 69, 71-2, 106, 111-12, 123, 129, 147, 189, 196  
 Robson, Karl, Journalist, 152, 202, 237  
 Roosevelt, President, 34, 39, 48, 248  
 Ross, Journalist, 132  
 Rubinstein, Journalist, 227  
 Rumania, 16, 22, 39, 48, 89, 107, 137, 193, 195  
 Runciman, Lord, 17-18  
 Ruthenia (separation of), viii, 26, 40, 41, 56, 103, 168, 185

## S

S. H. A. E. F., 49  
 Schram, Major, 120  
 Seton-Watson, Historian, 247  
 Ševčík, Dr., Minister, 148, 225  
 Schörner, General, 45  
*Sikorsky, General*, 36  
 Šumič, Minister, 109, 120  
 Simone, Journalist, 172  
 Široký, Vice-Prime Minister, 43, 90, 140, 146  
 Škoda Works, 62, 72  
 Slánský, Deputy, 38, 40, 55, 76, 90, 100, 120-1, 160, 188, 196, 232, 246  
 Slávik, Minister, 30  
 Slechta, Minister, 147  
 Slovak uprising, 37, 38  
 Smith, B. B. C. Correspondent, 125, 237  
 Smrkovský, Deputy, 91, 101, 114, 120, 196  
 Smutný, Chancellor, 49, 117, 220-2  
 Smuts, Field Marshal, 107  
 Sochorec, Deputy, 234  
 Sokol Physical Fitness Organisation, 62, 83, 91, 216, 226-7, 240-1, 248  
 Solcész, Minister, 43  
 Sosnar-Jura, Deputy, 79, 125  
 Soukup, Dr., 115



Soviet-Czechoslovak Friendship Society, 107  
 Špaček, Dr., 115  
 Spain, 30  
 Srámek, Msgr., Prime Minister, 28, 30, 43, 112, 127, 140-9, 235  
 Šrobár, Minister, 43, 148  
 Stalin, Generalissimo, 35, 48, 51, 67-70, 73, 94, 101, 165, 186, 188, 202, 247-8  
*Star*, 232  
 Steed, Wickham, Writer, 238  
 Steiner-Vesely, Police Colonel, 54  
 Steinhardt, Ambassador, 109, 120  
 Stránský, Minister, 43, 51, 112, 126, 129, 215-16, 229  
 Stross, M.P., 233  
 Šverma, Deputy, 38, 40  
 Svoboda, General, 34, 38, 43, 67, 91, 112, 124, 130, 137, 147, 153, 174, 188, 246  
 Sweden, 68  
 Switzerland, 147, 191, 246  
 Sychrava, Dr., Journalist, 173, 220, 223  
 Syria, 182, 194-5

## T

Tarasenko, Ambassador (U.N.O.), 182, 196  
 Teheran (Conference), 38-9  
 Telepress, 113  
 Teschen (Těšín), 21, 160, 167, 241  
 Thorez, Deputy, 146  
*Times*, *The*, 215, 236  
 Tiso, President, 192  
 Tito, Marshal, 89, 248  
 Togliatti, Deputy, 146  
 Trade Unions, 44, 61, 66, 79, 84-6, 90-2, 97, 106, 109, 113, 115, 121, 123-4, 129-31, 146-7, 166, 215, 232, 234, 246  
 Truman, President, 145  
 Tsíng, Ambassador (U.N.O.), ix, 178-9, 183, 195  
 Turjanica, Mr., 40  
 Tymel, Vice Prime Minister, 116, 146

## U

U.N.O., ix, 79, 92, 153, 159, 161-4, 178-201, 246, 249  
 U.N.R.R.A., 54, 64-5, 73, 83  
 U.S.A., 48, 51, 53, 101, 150-1, 154-63, 172, 175, 182, 184, 187-8, 191, 194-5, 198-200, 212-3, 224, 227, 229, 231, 236, 238, 246-9  
 U.S. Army, 44-7, 49, 53, 101, 248-9

U.S. Information Service, Prague, 150  
 U.S.S.R., x, 15-16, 30-7, 41-3, 54-60, 63, 64, 66, 69, 70-3, 92, 99, 100-16, 122, 124, 129, 131, 135-7, 151, 157, 159, 162, 167-8, 178-201, 213-15, 222-4, 227-8, 231-2, 237-50  
 Uhlíř, Deputy, 38  
 United Press, 113, 191  
 Uranium (Jachymov), 55, 186, 213, 232  
 Uršini, Vice Prime Minister, 43

## V

Vatican, 244  
 Veverka, Ambassador, 213  
 Václav, President, 180-1  
 Vicst, General, 30, 39  
 Vilim, Deputy, 80, 116, 131, 197, 213  
 Vlassov, General, 45-7  
 Vlček, General, 33, 41  
 Vodička, Deputy, 99  
*Völkische*, 191  
 Vyšinsky, Minister, 41, 89, 107, 193, 223, 245

## W

W.F.U.N.A., 161, 163-4, 169-70  
 War Veterans' Union, 62, 92, 98, 216  
 Warsaw (uprising), 39  
 Weiner, Consul, 170  
*Weltwoche*, 147  
 Wigg, Colonel, M.P., 232, 234  
 Winocour, Journalist, 97

## Y

Yalta (Conference), 193  
 Youth League, 62, 91, 127, 131  
 Yugoslavia, 16, 25, 28, 39, 72, 89, 98-9, 110, 153, 168, 180, 191, 248

## Z

Zášková-Bátková, Deputy, x  
 Zápotočský, Prime Minister, 32, 61, 66, 85-6, 90-1, 97, 120, 123, 125, 130, 140, 143, 146, 166, 196, 219, 223, 233, 234, 241  
 Zenkl, Vice Prime Minister, 75-6, 84, 106, 111-12, 129, 162, 190, 219, 229, 241  
 Zink, Mr., 114, 173  
 Zmrhal, Minister, 87, 90  
 Zorn, Minister, 107-14, 158, 146, 186, 189, 195-7, 224, 248